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The best-selling RISC OS magazine in the world

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- Market confidence in Acorn

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ISSUE 206 APRIL 1999 £3.95





CASTLE TECHNOLOGY

FOR ALL YOUR ACORN HARDWARE & PERIPHERALS

INTERFACES

25% off when bought with drive or scanner etc

CT's Storm SCSI interface offers unbeatable performance. Using 15MB/s SCSI components and our ultra-reliable SCSI FS, Storm's a guaranteed winner.



	Ex VAT	Inc VAT
A30x0 IDE interface kit - 2.5" hard drive	£52	£61.10
A3020 fixing kit - 2.5" hard drive	£8	£9.40
A3/400 IDE interface for 2.5" & 3.5" h.d.	£60	£70.50
Storm8 SCSI2 interface - A30x0 A4000	£88	£103.40
Storm16 SCSI2 i/f - A300/A400 A5/7000	£96	£112.80
StormDMA32 SCSI2 i/f RPC	£128	£150.40
Storm16 SCSI2/10BaseT Ethernet i/f	£148	£173.90
Storm16 SCSI2/10BaseT&2 Ethernet i/f	£196	£230.30

HARD DRIVES (BARE)

170MB A3000/A3010 interface included	£95	£111.63
170MB A3020 fitting kit included	£59	£69.33
170MB A300/A400 interface included	£100	£117.50
500MB A3000/A3010 interface included	£128	£150.40
500MB A3020 fitting kit included	£89	£104.58
500MB A300/A400 interface included	£134	£157.45
210MB 3.5" IDE for A4000 & A5000	£45	£52.88
500MB 3.5" IDE for A4000 & A5000	£59	£69.33
1.2GB 3.5" IDE for RiscPC & A7000/+	£69	£81.08
2GB 3.5" IDE for RiscPC & A7000/+	£80	£94.00
4GB 3.5" IDE for RiscPC & A7000/+	£99	£116.33
100MB 3.5" SCSI	£39	£45.83
500MB 3.5" SCSI	£65	£76.38
2GB 3.5" SCSI	£115	£135.13
4GB 3.5" SCSI	£149	£175.08
6GB 3.5" SCSI	£239	£280.83

EXTERNAL SCSI CASES

for hard drives CD drives & removeable drives
FREE headphones and data cable worth over £20

The unique Combo Case - takes any two SCSI devices & gets rid of all those cables, mains leads etc. Accepts any 5.25 unit.



Acorn M E U 2x CD + free 5.25" slot	£69	£81.08
Case for single SCSI device	£40	£47.00
Combo case for 2 SCSI devices	£60	£70.50

SCANNERS

inc FREE software worth £49

The new ultra-slim ScanExpress 36-bit colour scanner has a compact footprint, fast scanning speeds and quiet operation. Free ImageMaster software and TWAIN driver. Free PC interface/software kit (SCSI only). Optional transparency adaptor available.



ScanExpress 6000 parallel	£99	£116.33
ScanExpress 6000 SCSI	£119	£139.83
ScanExpress 12000 SCSI	£169	£198.58
Scanflat 1200 pro SCSI	£399	£468.83
ImageMaster & Twain	£49	£57.58
Scanflat transparency kit - slides etc	£149	£175.08
ScanExpress transparency kit-slides etc	£75	£88.13
CanoScan 2700F film scanner	£499	£586.33

FIXING KITS, CABLES etc

Podule case for A3000	£16	£18.80
Fixing kits for hard drives	£8	£9.40
A4 IDE hard drive fixing kit	£12	£14.10
A300 series backplane (4 way 4 layer)	£48	£56.40
A7000/+ 1 slot backplane (not with CD)	£34	£39.95
Risc PC 2 slot backplane	£30	£35.25
2nd slice for Risc PC inc 105watt PSU	£99	£116.33
2nd slice for Risc PC	£76	£89.30
SCSI I & II cables choice from	£10	£11.75
SCSI/IDE ribbon cables from	£5	£5.88
SCSI terminator/adaptors (selection)	£10	£11.75
Monitor cable for all Acorn (selection)	£10	£11.75

XTRA HARD DRIVES

Guaranteed 4MB+/sec read transfer rate with Castle Storm DMA32 SCSI card

4GB XTRA 3.5" SCSI	£179	£210.33
8GB XTRA 3.5" SCSI	£329	£386.58
18GB XTRA 3.5" SCSI	£599	£703.83

VIDEO HARD DRIVES

Fastest on market - externally boxed and ideal for Video use - Storm DMA32 card recommended

4GB Video SCSI external	£349	£410.08
9GB Video SCSI external	£599	£703.83
18GB Video SCSI external	£899	£1056.33

CD ROM DRIVES

inc FREE driver software & fixing kit worth £29

Castle Technology's range of CD ROM drives are chosen for their reliability, ease of use and robustness. They have fast access times, and include driver software. They are particularly suitable for multimedia applications.



4x speed SCSI CD ROM drive	£29	£34.08
8x speed SCSI CD ROM drive	£34	£39.95
32x speed SCSI CD ROM drive	£69	£81.08
24x speed IDE CD ROM drive	£45	£52.88
32x speed IDE CD ROM drive	£49	£57.58
IDE CD driver for Risc PC & A7000	£25	£29.38
6x4x2 CD int ReWriter inc !CDBurn	£285	£334.88
6x4x2 Ext CD ReWriter inc !CDBurn	£335	£393.63
16x4x4 CD int ReWriter inc !CDBurn	£349	£410.08
16x4x4 Ext CD ReWriter inc !CDBurn	£399	£468.83
CD ROM fixing kit (data & audio cable)	£4	£4.70

CD TOWERS

7 SCSI CD towers with lockable doors

Add the Castle Technology CD Tower to your network and have simultaneous access to between 7 & 28 CD-ROMs. Enables CD resource discs to remain locked and untouched but accessible from all over the network. Up to 4 towers can be connected to one computer. Fully compatible with Access CD network software.



8x CD 7 drive Tower	£379	£445.33
32x CD 7 drive Tower	£579	£680.33

SPECIAL OFFER!

128K ISDN MODEMS

Join the digital revolution at lightning fast speeds! Using a Castle Technology ISDN modem (connected to an Integrated Services Digital Network pair of lines from BT), you can take advantage of fast Web browsing, fast data transfer, fast faxing, and a hi-performance phone line – all from one hi-tech box! Choose from four network/stand-alone models at great prices!



KEYBOARDS MICE ETC

Ergo keyboard for pre Risc PC	£69	£81.08
Ergo keyboard for Risc PC A7000/+ N/C	£39	£45.83
Keyboard for Risc PC A7000/+ N/C	£19	£22.33
Keyboard cable (6 way)	£10	£11.75
Mouse for all Acorns (not A7000 etc)	£12	£14.10
Mouse for A7000/+ N/C	£15	£17.63
Mouse balls heavy (pack of 10)	£15	£17.63
Floppy drive any Acorn except A300 A4	£30	£35.25
Replacement floppy drive for A4	£79	£92.83

REMOVABLE DRIVES

- free media with all drives

For flexible, expandable storage, the infinite capacity of a removable drive is perfect. All drives are the latest spec, and internal versions can be fitted into the CT Combo case. Data transfer rate up to 8.8MB/sec (Nomai).



ZIP drive internal 100MB SCSI	£99	£116.33
ZIP drive external 100MB SCSI	£99	£116.33
ZIP drive external parallel not A300 etc	£109	£128.08
Iomega Parallel ZIP driver (100MB)	£25	£29.38
MaxIT internal 500MB SCSI drive	£129	£151.58
JAZ1GB internal SCSI drive	£189	£222.08
JAZ 1GB external SCSI drive	£219	£257.33
SyJet internal 1.5GB SCSI drive	£219	£257.33
SyJet external 1.5GB SCSI drive	£255	£299.63
JAZ 2GB internal SCSI drive	£259	£304.33
JAZ 2GB external SCSI drive	£279	£327.83
PD 24x CD & 630MB optical SCSI drive	£249	£292.58

MEMORY

A300 & A400 1-4MB	£75	£88.13
A300 & A400 4-8MB	£119	£139.83
A3000 1-4MB	£55	£64.63
A3000 4-8MB	£149	£175.08
A3000 serial port upgrade	£25	£29.38
A3010 1-2MB	£25	£29.38
A3010 1-4MB	£59	£69.33
A3020 & A4000 2-4MB	£35	£41.13
A5000 2-4MB	£60	£70.50
A5000 4-8MB	£139	£163.33
16MB SIMM - Risc PC A7000/+	CALL	CALL
32MB SIMM - Risc PC A7000/+	CALL	CALL
64MB SIMM - Risc PC A7000/+	CALL	CALL
128MB SIMM - Risc PC A7000/+	CALL	CALL
Risc PC 2MB VRAM	£75	£88.13

NEW NEW NEW!!

BJC 7000 – THE ULTIMATE COLOUR BUBBLE-JET PRINTER FROM CANON

This 4-colour bi-directional printer has a resolution of 1200x600dpi, and can print up to 4.5 ppm on paper up to A4+ size (so you can print right to the edge of A4) Choose from Canon's special hi-resolution papers & optional Photo Cartridge for Super PhotoReal quality prints. For sheer quality and durability, this has to be the one!



Special price only **£189** £222.08 inc VAT

PROCESSORS & RISC OS

Risc OS 3.11 chip set	£25	£29.38
Risc OS 3.11 manual set	£20	£23.50
Risc OS 3.11 hardware upgrade - A300	£20	£23.50
ARM 610 processor (2nd user)	£69	£81.08
ARM 3 processor for A3000 A300 A400	£99	£116.33

MODEMS

All modems are external and come with FREE on-line time

56k modem	£59	£69.33
128k ISDN modem	£99	£116.33
128k ISDN + 2 analogue phone ports	£109	£128.08
128k ISDN hub router with 10BaseT	£249	£292.58
128k ISDN modem router (managed)	£385	£452.38

COMBOS (HD & CD)

Full range available - free fitting in combo case when all purchased at the same time

8x CD & 100MB HD - external SCSI	£130	£152.75
8x CD & 500MB HD - external SCSI	£150	£176.25

REMOVABLE MEDIA

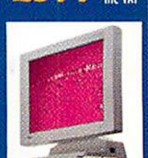
Zip 100MB media	£8	£9.40
Zip 100MB media (6 pack)	£45	£52.88
Syquest 105MB media	£29	£34.08
Syquest 135MB media	£21	£24.68
Syquest 230MB media	£19	£22.33
Syquest 270MB media	£32	£37.60
MaxIT 500MB media	£29	£34.08
Nomai 750MB media	£38	£44.65
JAZ 1GB media	£58	£68.15
SyJet 1.5GB media	£55	£64.63
JAZ 2GB media	£79	£92.83
PD 630MB media	£18	£21.15
CD 630MB write once media (Pk of 10)	£12	£14.10
CD 630MB re-write media	£12	£14.10

COLOUR MONITORS

3 year warranty on all monitors (1 year on AKF18)

The latest developments in TFT screen technology bring the ProLite 36 space-saving flat screens from Iiyama. The 14.1" screen has a viewable area almost 17" and a maximum resolution 1024x768. It is ecologically advanced with low power consumption and reduced eye strain. Suitable for schools or business.

£599 £703.83 inc VAT



AKF18 14" grade B - pre RiscPC"	£79	£92.83
14" SVGA	£89	£104.58
15" digital SVGA	£110	£129.25
17" digital SVGA	£200	£235.00
15" digital SVGA Iiyama	£159	£186.83
17" digital SVGA Pro 0.25 Iiyama	£340	£399.50
21" digital SVGA Iiyama	£729	£856.58
14" colour LCD display (TFT Analogue)	£599	£703.83

INKJET PRINTERS

inc FREE data cable & Acorn driver WORTH £20

Advanced inkjet technology for bright colour images & fast printing times. Up to 1200dpi resolution (virtual photographic quality). Supplied with Acorn drivers & data cables.



CANON BJC-250	£84	£98.70
CANON BJC-4300	£105	£123.38
CANON BJC-4650	£227	£266.73
CANON BJC-7000	£189	£222.08
EPSON Stylus colour 440	£115	£135.13
EPSON Stylus colour 640	£149	£175.08
EPSON Stylus colour 850	£219	£257.33
Parallel printer cable	£10	£11.75
Turbo driver for above printers	£45	£52.88
Acorn printer driver for any listed printer	£10	£11.75
TCP/IP (LPR) postscript printer driver	£175	£205.63

SPECIALS

DOA warranty only

JP150 sheet feeder	£10	£11.75
Master 128 motherboard	£10	£11.75
German keyboards RiscPC/A7000 etc	£10	£11.75
A5000 Power Supply Unit	£15	£17.63
SJ Econet Bridge	£20	£23.50
Acorn Econet interface	£5	£5.88
SJ Econet starter kit	£20	£23.50
PC card for A3000 A3010 A3020 A4000	£99	£116.33
Startwrite wordprocessor	£5	£5.88

DELIVERY CHARGES - Next day insured

Orders over £200 paid by debit card	FREE	FREE
Small items	£6	£7.05
All other orders	£11	£12.93
Fitting charge (inc collection)	£18	£21.15

We welcome payment by cheque (allow 5 days to clear), Credit and Debit cards.

EDUCATIONAL ORDERS WELCOMED.

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Saturday 9.00am till 1.00pm

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All products carry a full 1 year warranty unless otherwise stated.



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Next month in Acorn User

ProCAD+ reviewed in all its glory, HTMLPro revealed plus all the regulars and a special Doom level designer competiton

On sale 15 April 1999











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Introductory special offers

** £25.00 Voucher or Webster XL **
*** with all packs ***

1 years unlimited access for £99inc vat
33K Modem and 1 yr. for £99 (£116.33)
56K V90 Modem + 1yr £125 (£146.88)

Desktop FAX MODEMS

33600 Voice BABT approved	£40.00	£47.00
56k x2 / V90 3Com USR	£118.30	£129.00
56k Flex /V90 (Rockwell)	£58.72	£69.00
ISDN modem (external)	£169.36	£169.00
High speed serial cards from	£78.30	£92.00

Internet & Modem Software

Ant Internet Suite	£94.05	£110.51
ArcFAX Fax software	£26.38	£31.00
WebsterXL Browser	£21.28	25.00



High Quality Acorn ERGO mouse £12.00 + VAT

Ring for Specials — MONITORS

	Ex. VAT	Inc. VAT
14" SVGA 0.28 (3yr on-site)	£89.00	£104.58
14" SVGA 0.28 Multi-Media	£105.00	£123.38
15" SVGA 0.28 (3yr on-site)	£110.00	£129.25
15" SVGA 0.28 Multimedia	£129.00	£151.57
15" Iiyama Vison Master 350	£129.00	£151.57
17" SVGA 0.28 (3yr on-site)	£185.00	£217.38
17" SVGA 0.25 (3yr on-site)	£275.00	£323.13
17" Iiyama Vison Master 702	£249.00	£292.58
17" Iiyama Pro 400	£325.00	£381.88
19" SVGA 0.26 (1yr RTB)	£280.00	£329.00
19" SVGA 0.26 (3yr on-site)	£360.00	£423.00
19" Iiyama Pro 450	£460.00	£540.50
21" SVGA Mitsub' (D'tron)	£499.00	£586.33
21" SVGA 0.25 (3yr on-site)	£540.00	£634.50
21" Iiyama Pro 501	£665.00	£781.38
38" SVGA (1yr on-site)	£1500.00	£1762.50
AKF18 Multisync (14")	£115.00	£135.13
AKF53 Multisync (14")	£165.00	£193.88
AKF53 Multisync (14")	£195.00	£229.13
AKF12 PAL (14" ex demo)	£65.00	£76.38

Various 2nd user monitors available.

THE BEST! PRINTER PRICES

(Please ring for latest prices)		Ex. VAT	Inc. VAT
Canon BJC80W portable col.		£152.00	£178.60
Canon BJC 250 colour	A4	£84.00	£98.70
Canon BJC 4300 colour #	A4	£105.00	£123.38
Canon BJC 4300 Scan ! #	A4	£149.00	£175.08
Canon BJC 4650 colour #	A3	£227.00	£266.73
Canon BJC 4650 Scan ! #	A3	£275.00	£323.13
Canon BJC 7000 colour *	A4	£169.00	£198.58
Epson Stylus 440 colour	A4	£99.00	£116.33
Epson Stylus 640 Colour	A4	£130.00	£152.75
Epson Stylus 850 Colour	A4	£230.00	£270.25
Epson Stylus 1520 Colour	A3	£350.00	£411.25
Epson Stylus photo 700 #	A4	£149.00	£175.08
Epson Stylus Photo EX #	A3	£328.00	£385.40
HP 420C	A4	£74.00	£86.95
HP 695C Colour	A4	£110.00	£129.25
HP 895CXI Colour	A4	£200.00	£235.00
HP LASERJET 1100		£249.00	£292.58
HP LASERJET 2100		£460.00	£540.50
Photo drivers for #		£58.72	£69.00
Scanner drivers for !		£29.79	£35.00

* driver soon *** FREE Acorn driver by request ***

POWERED SPEAKERS

	Ex. VAT	Inc. VAT
60 watts with PSU	£16.98	£19.95
240 watts with PSU	£24.68	£29.00
Subwoofer system with PSU	£42.00	£49.35

6 months Interest Free Credit On All Systems inc peripherals software and 2/3 yr optional warranties

233Mhz SA RiscPC Offers

e.g. RPC SA 2M+32Mb/2.1G/40x CD & 17" monitor for only **£1125 + VAT or £34.00/month via L.C.F. ***

RPC SA bases from **£850** inc VAT or £22.00/month via L.C.F. *

AND we will match or beat your best offer

SA J233 Web Wizard

2M+32Mb/2.1G/24x CD/15" mon/Stereo Spk & FREE software inc !Browse, Jarva and Word 6/7 compatibility. Free 56K modem for only **£1145 + VAT**

Finance Deals

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* No early settlement penaltys.
* Can make additional purchases upto your credit limit without re-application.
***Ring For full details**

A7000+ System Offers

e.g. A7000 +16M / 2.1G / 40x CD /15" mon & Stereo Spk for only £749 exc VAT or £23.00 / month via L.C.F.

Please ask for other combinations



A7000 + Peak Performer

8M / 2.1G / 32x CD /14" mon / Stereo Spk & FREE Software Bundle for only £749 + VAT (£808 + VAT for both bundles)

Casio QV100 Digital Camera



PC s/w only £199.00 exc vat (£233.83)

Acorn & PC s/w £280.00 (£329.00)

Qv11a/Qv100 s/w kit £96 (£112.80)

HARD DRIVES AND SUB-SYSTEMS *WHY PAY MORE???*

A3000 /A3010	Ex. VAT	Inc. VAT	A3020 Ex. VAT	A3020 Inc. VAT
170 Mb	£ 95	£111.63	£55	£64.63
340 Mb	£112	£131.60	£69	£81.08
512 Mb	£127	£149.23	£85	£99.88
810 Mb	£139	£163.33	# £119	£139.83
1 Gb	£149	£175.08	# £124	£145.70
2 Gb	£159	£186.83	# £134	£158.63
3 Gb	£169	£198.58	# £144	£169.20
4 Gb	£189	£222.08	# £164	£192.70

A3000 version includes CD ROM i/f which can be used in A3020 or A4000 For external A3000 add £20.00 +VAT
\# includes partitioning software

A4000/A5000/A400	Ex. VAT	Inc. VAT
420M #	£49	£57.58
420Mb *	£76	£89.30
540Mb *	£85	£99.88
700Mb *	£93	£109.28
1.2Gb *	£115	£135.13
2.1Gb *	£125	£146.88
3.2Gb *	£135	£158.63
4.0Gb *	£145	£170.38

* inc. internal removable HD & CD ROM i/f. For partitioning software only deduct £25.00 + vat (29.38)

RPC /A7000	Ex. VAT	Inc. VAT
420M #	£49	£57.58
512M	£59	£69.33
1.2G	£70	£82.25
2.1G	£80	£94.00
3.2G	£85	£99.88
4.3G	£95	£111.63
6.4G	£105	£123.38
8.4G	£115	£135.13
16.8G	£210	£246.75

\# limited supply



ACORN TRACKBALL & MOUSE £29.79 + VAT

CD-ROMS

IDE			SCSI		
40x	£49.00	(£57.58)	32x	£70.00	(£82.25)
32x	£45.00	(£52.88)	16x	£40.00	(£47.00)
24x	£39.00	(£45.83)	12x	£34.00	(£39.95)
8x	£30.00	(£35.25)	8x	£30.00	(£35.25)

For EXTERNAL IDE or SCSI 1 add £50.00 + VAT (inc. cable) (3.5 IDE driver £15 + vat) IDE int. fitting kit £5 inc.
For external SCSI II add £55.00 + Vat. (inc. cable)
Internal SCSI fitting kits from £10 + vat

SCSI HARD DRIVES

540M (# limited Stock)	£60.00	(£70.50)
1.0Gb	£70.00	(£82.25)
2Gb (7200rpm) #	£110.00	(£129.25)
4.3Gb (5400 or 7200rpm)	£140.00	(£164.50)
4.3Gb (10,000rpm) #	£199.00	(£233.83)
9.1Gb (7200rpm)	£235.00	(£276.13)
18.6Gb 7,200rpm	£425.00	(£499.38)

CD-ROM WRITERS



Prices Start from £175.00 +

2x2x6x Re-Writer	£170.00	(£199.75)
4x4x16xRe-Writer	£235.00	(£276.13)
CD-BURN	£49.00	£57.58
CD-SCRIBE2	£49.00	£57.58



SCSI 8x **Autochanger** £85.00 + vat (£99.88)

IDE Removable Drives

Zip 100 IDE	£65.00	£76.38
Zip SCSI ext	£85.00	£99.88
Zip SCSI int	£85.00	£99.88

IDE drives require suitable drivers/ hardware

Parallel Removable Drives

Zip Parallel *	£110.00	£129.25
Jaz 1G Parallel*	£239.00	£280.83
Syjet 1.5G p'll	£249.00	£292.58
Jaz 2G Parallel*	£315.00	£370.13

SCSI Removable Drives

PD650/CD	£139.00	£163.33
Nomai 750	£165.00	£193.88
Jaz 1G int	£189.00	£222.08
Jaz 1G ext	£199.00	£233.83
Syjet 1.5G int	£199.00	£233.83
Syjet 1.5G ext	£199.00	£233.83
Jaz 2G int	£265.00	£311.38
Jaz 2G ext	£265.00	£311.38

** P'llel drives inc. Acorn Software*

Removable Drive Media

	Ex. VAT	Inc.VAT		Ex. VAT	Inc.VAT
100mb Zip	£8.45	£9.93	1Gb Jazz	£58.00	£68.15
Zip 5 pack	£38.30	£45.00	1.5Gb Syquest	£58.00	£68.15
120mb LS120	£7.50	£8.81			
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A7000+ production rescue

Castle Technology Ltd (CTL), the company set up by the Castle Technology dealership to take over the distribution of Acorn-branded computers, has secured the rights from Element 14 (E14 – the new name for Acorn Computers Ltd) to take over manufacturing of the Acorn A7000+. The A7000 has been of critical importance to the schools market as it has been the entry-level machine, ideal for classrooms.

Supplies of the A7000+ are currently scarce, but CTL's managing director, Jack Lillingston, says a new batch of machines is expected to be on tap by the end of March. In the official statement, Lillingston commented: "CTL has always been completely dedicated to Acorn desktop computers and we are very pleased to be able to ensure the future and ongoing support for these computers."

Stan Boland, CEO of E14, also commented: "We are delighted that CTL is able to undertake the production of these computers. We wish them every success in the knowledge that their expertise will ensure the best possible solution for the Acorn community."



After the fiasco of the closure of the Acorn workstations division and the still-birth of Risc PC 2, at last Acorn seems to be making positive moves which benefit the Acorn market. Hopefully, the A7000+ deal will herald further announcements which will secure the future manufacturing of other Acorn lines, like the existing Risc PC, for example.

There were some concerns that as all Acorn's computer models are quite old in industry terms, component sourcing might be a problem preventing future production runs. CTL appears to have overcome this potential problem.

Whether or not CTL has future plans to redesign or otherwise improve Acorn branded models in order to keep up to date is unconfirmed. However, whatever CTLs plans are in this regard, a number of other manufacturers are said to be poised to produce their own hardware.

Their plans depend solidly on whether or not the future of RISC OS is secured by the Paul Middleton-led RISC OS Ltd and RISC OS Foundation initiatives which aim to assume responsibility for the maintenance and development of RISC OS from E14 as well as its sub-licensing.

Anti-virus upgrade

One of the attractions of RISC OS compared with other operating systems is that the problem with software virus infestation isn't that great. However, there are RISC OS viruses floating around and it's prudent to immunise your computer against any such threat. Pineapple Software produce the best-know anti-virus solution for RISC OS, called *!Killer*.

!Killer forms part of the software which is distributed to members of the Pineapple Virus Protection Scheme as part of the regular updating service. The Scheme has been running for nearly seven years now and in that time the number of known viruses has increased from around 20 back in 1992 to over 200 today. Pineapple has announced a new, faster version of *!Killer*.

The Pineapple scheme costs £28.20 inc.VAT for the first year's subscription and this is reduced for subsequent years. Updates are distributed every four months or so.

For more information, contact Pineapple on tel: 0181 599 1476, or E-mail sales@pineapple.demon. co.uk

8-bit extravaganza

Atom, Beeb and Electron fans take note, the 1999 UK 8-bit Convention "UK8" will take place at the Saddlers Club, Walsall, Birmingham, on Sunday September 26th. The one-day event opens at 9.30 and ends at 5pm. Admission is by £2 ticket only. The event is run by enthusiasts, not for profit.

Anyone interested in exhibiting should E-mail uk8@spheroid.demon. co.uk or write, enclosing an A4 stamped addressed envelope, to Brian Watson, Harrowden, 39, High Street, Sutton, ELY, Cambs, CB6 2RA, England.



BJC-7000 support

Two companies, ExpLAN and Spacetech, have separately announced printer drivers for Canon's BJC-7000 and 7100 ink-jet models. Both printers use Canon's unique ink fixative, quality optimized for ordinary non-coated paper. When we tested ink-jet printers last year, we recommended the Epson Stylus Photo range, which is supported by Spacetech, as being decisively superior for photographic work, however the Canon BJC-7000 did have the edge when printing on non-coated paper.

The newer 7100 is twice as fast as the 7000 in certain print modes as it is bi-directional. It also comes with a photo-real printer cartridge as standard instead of the ordinary 4-colour cartridge which is standard in the 7000. Spacetech unequivocally develop products for the photo-realism market, although their printer driver does support the ordinary four-colour cartridge.

Meanwhile, ExpLAN unequivocally supports the printers' four colour mode of operation for high quality text and graphics on plain paper and card, the latter making use of the printers' straight-through paper path for thicker media. If your priority is photo realism, ExpLAN recommend Spacetech's solution. However, ExpLAN say their driver has unrivalled support for the 7000-series non-photographic printing features, especially where overall cost per print is an issue. As the 7100 doesn't come with a 4-colour cartridge as standard, ExpLAN bundles one with 7100 printers it sells, which adds to the price.

ExpLAN's price for the soon to be discontinued BJC-7000, including standard print cartridges and their 4-colour RISC OS driver is £233.83 inc.VAT. Their BJC-7100 bundle, including the driver and a 4-colour cartridge on top of the standard photo cartridge is priced £327.83 inc.VAT. Spacetech sells its photo-real drivers, including a colour calibration application, separately for £69.95 inc.VAT or with a 7000 for £245.00 inc.VAT or a 7100 for £299 inc.VAT.

ExpLAN can be contacted at tel: 01822 613868, or via e-mail: sales@explan.demon.co.uk Spacetech are at tel: 01305 822753, E-mail: chris@spacetech.co.uk

Edinburgh RISC OS group

What better place is there than Edinburgh to meet and discuss things RISC OS? The newly formed Edinburgh RISC OS users Association (ERA), meet in O'Neills on South Bridge in Edinburgh at 9pm on Tuesdays. Walking time from Princes Street is about 7 minutes and apparently there is plenty free parking available in Chambers street, which is just around the corner from O'Neills.

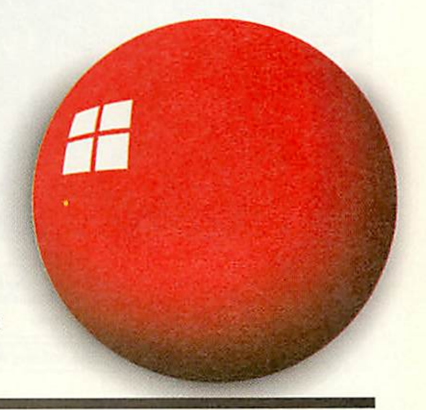
All attendees, whether or not they reside in or near Edinburgh, are welcome at the meetings and there is no membership charge. For more information, contact Michael Marshall via e-mail: micm@toth.org.uk, or you can phone him at tel: 07010 700 599.

Acorn Comic Relief

Paul Johnson has been working hard to collect Acorn-related items which, by the time you read this, will have been auctioned to raise money for this year's Comic Relief appeal.

The latest news before we went to press was that many well-known Acorn names, like Cumana, CJE Micros, Clares and even E14 (once known as Acorn Computers Limited) have generously donated to the auction catalogue and the projected amount pledged was looking well past the £2,500 mark.

Even if it's too late to take part in the auction, there might be some left-overs or you may be interested in contributing in some other way to the cause via Paul. Check out the Web site at: http://www.acornusers.org/comicrelief/, or contact Paul at paul@physchem. freeserve.co.uk.



Foundation and empire

Members of the now-defunct Acorn Clan are being offered an alternative focal point: the RISC OS Foundation. This is the first project to be undertaken by the recently formed RISC OS Ltd company set up by Paul Middleton of Uniqueway fame, and with the backing of paid-up members of what started out as the Phoenix Steering Group.

As we went to press at the end of February, the steering group was still in the middle of negotiations with Acorn/E14 to secure a contract which would give RISC OS Ltd the rights to develop and sub-licence RISC OS.

It now looks like the negotiations will over-shoot the February 27th deadline set by E14 and RISC OS Ltd, but Paul Middleton remained cautiously optimistic. While we wait for the negotiations to progress, attention can be focussed on the RISC OS Foundation. This was formally launched at the Acorn Southwest show in February.

Unlike the Clan, which was a life-time membership for a one-off payment, the RISC OS Foundation requires an annual renewable membership fee. The press release says it all: "The Foundation will be the new focus for users who want to keep up with the latest news about the RISC OS market and see the continued development of RISC OS through into a full 32 bit version for the new millennium."

Membership will cost £25 + VAT for existing Clan members or £30 + VAT for other new members. The membership buys a quarterly newsletter as well as a CD-ROM of the latest RISC OS software, shareware, commercial demos, etc. twice a year.

For non-professional coders there will be a chance for Foundation members to subscribe to an e-mail based developer support scheme later in the year. The first 100 subscribers will receive, free of charge, an A1 sized poster showing contact details of all the companies involved in the RISC OS Community worldwide.

Membership applications or queries can either be e-mailed to: foundation@riscos.com (initial membership fees can be paid by credit card) or posted to: The RISCOS Foundation, 3 Clarendon Road, Cardiff, CF3 7JD.

The actual office to deal with the Foundation had not yet been set up at press time, but telephone lines were promised by mid-March.



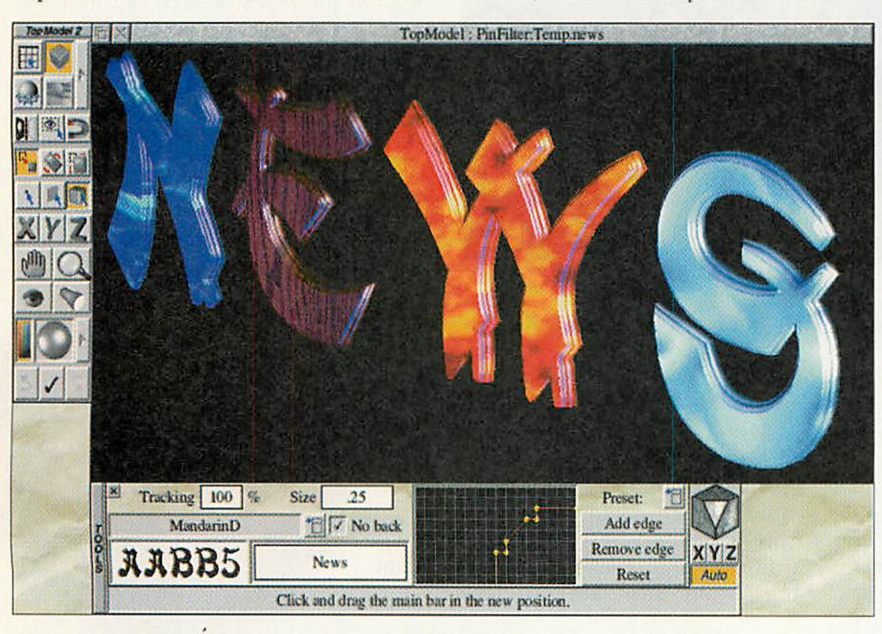
!TopModel news

Spacetech has announced that version 2.14 of the *!TopModel* 3D graphics package is now available. TopModel CD Collection release 2 has also been announced, is now in stock, and upgrades for existing users are also available.

New features in *!TopModel 2.14* include: Global join in a single pass (Useful to collapse models or to ensure that polygons are not larger than a certain size; Resources manager: it is now easy to edit, load and save views, colours materials and paths; Bevelling tools to produce stunning linear extrusions with a user drawn bevel at the corner, and plenty of new shortcuts and minor utilities and tools. The new TopModel CD Collection includes hundreds of models and textures, the *!TopViewer* application in case you don't have *!TopModel* to view and rotate your models, plus there is Top3DFonts plug-in.

!TopModel 2.14 is priced £152.75 inc.VAT. Upgrades for existing users are priced £29.95 inc.VAT or you can get it free with by purchasing TopModel CD Collection 2. The latter is priced £58.63 inc.VAT.

For the latest *!TopModel* information, see http://pages.inrete.it/sincronia/ topmodel/ cd2.html or follow the *!TopModel* links from the Spacetech pages (http://www. spacetech.co.uk). Spacetech, tel: 01305 822753, e-mail: chris@spacetech.co.uk.



Cheaper than free?

Dixons FreeServe and now BT's ClickFree service, among others, are heralding 'free' Internet services in the UK. All you pay is the local call-rate for dialling in to the Internet service provider (ISP), which is about 4p a minute at peak times and as low as 1p a minute at weekends at normal BT rates.

It can't get any cheaper than that – or can it? Indeed it can, but you have to be a fairly heavy user to make it pay. ClaraNet (http://www.clara.net) has just launched a service called ClaraCall. Although there is a monthly subscription, for this you get up to 40 percent off the cost of dialling in to the ClaraNet ISP. 40 percent off as little as a penny a minute is not much, but if you use the Internet a lot during the day, you effectively get a discount of 1.6p a minute on the call cost.

At this rate you need to be connected for around ten hours a month in order to start saving over ordinary 'free' services. Check the ClaraNet Web site for more details.

!LongFiles 2.10

!LongFiles 2.10 has been released, by its author, Jason Tribbeck. This release is mainly a CDFS bug-fix and Jason reports that a RISC OS 4-compatible upgrade is next on the agenda, adding the ability to make *!LongFiles* attach to discs, rather than filing systems. For the latest news, check out http://www.tribbeck.com/longfiles/

!Q-Lock 1.1

!Q-Lock, a utility that enables you to encrypt all your sensitive data with a claimed 'military' level of security, is now available in release 1.10 form. *!Q-Lock* uses the same strong encryption method as used in PGP (Pretty Good Privacy), a public domain encryption system. However, you don't need a commercial version of PGP to run *!Q-Lock*.

There numerous improvements in *!Q-Lock 1.1*, including separate and unique directory encryption – so different users of the same computer can make their own directories private. For more on the new features, check out the home page of *!Q-Lock's* author, Dr.Nat Queen, of Birmingham University's School of Mathematics and Statistics. His site is at: http://web.bham.ac.uk/N.M.Queen/

Nat has also added an e-mail encryption solution called *!Mail-Lock*. He's tested it with ANT's *!Marcel* E-mail package, but says it should work with others too.

Chart those stars

All the way from New Zealand, Rick Hudson has announced that he's decided to release a star charting program he's written. According to Rick, the program, *!ROCchart*, differs from many astronomy programs in that it is not a type of electronic "planetarium" but designed purely for the generation of star charts. Therefore, it knows nothing of solar system objects or observer-specific details.

He adds, what it can do is generate fast, high detail, charts from the Tycho and Guide Star catalogues. To do *this it* requires the data resources of a commercial product called "Guide" from Project Pluto (http://www.projectpluto. com). *!ROCchart* provides a RISC OS interface to some of the extensive resources available on Guide.

However, according to Rick, *!ROCchart* also works quite well without the extra resources from the Guide CD, providing from its own internal resources – bright stars down to 7th magnitude (about 15000), common star names and Bayer references, complete NGC/IC/Messier catalogue including common names, constellation boundaries and figures, and object ID, location of pointer plus equatorial grid.

Rick's home page is at: http://home.clear.net.nz/pages/rickh and he can be e-mailed via rickh@actrix. gen.nz.



news

We're staying loyal, says Iota

Dick Wallin, Iota Software's managing director, was moved to make a statement recently in order to reassure customers that the company wasn't about to abandon the Acorn market. Iota produces *!DataPower*, one of the most accomplished RISC OS applications and arguably the best database program for the platform.

Iota is producing versions of DataPower for Microsoft *Windows* and the Apple Mac, which sparked fears in some quarters that the company was giving up on RISC OS. Wallin stated: "Iota Software wish to make it clear that *!DataPower* continues to be developed and fully supported on the Acorn platform and will be for the foreseeable future. We are certainly not going to drop support for our most successful product!"

Wallin admitted that future development of all versions of *!DataPower* will be carried out using PC software development tools which are, unfortunately, superior to those currently available to RISC OS developers.

However, the core code for all versions of *!DataPower* originally came from the RISC OS version and Wallin says that superior PC-based development tools will result in improvements to the RISC OS version of *!DataPower* previously impossible with RISC OS tools. Therefore, argues Wallin, Acorn users get the best of both worlds.

i-cubed quit network market

i-cubed, which has manufactured Ethernet networking cards for the Acorn market for many years, has decided to get out of making Ethernet cards altogether. The company says it is keen to withdraw from the market as smoothly as possible so as to minimize disruption to its customers.

To that end, the company has set Friday 26th March this year as the final date for accepting orders for cards, upgrades and out of warranty repairs. All outstanding orders are expected to have been despatched by April 1st. No jobs will be lost as a result, but it effectively ends the Acorn association with i-cubed, which the company says is a sad mark in their history.

Aleph One PC cards back

Aleph One has announced that Acorn ACA57 PC second processor cards are now available once more. The cards are fitted with IBM/Cyrix 5x86 processors clocked at 100MHz, complemented with 128K of secondary cache. Prices are (inc. UK P&P and VAT for one user only): with no software – £295; with *PCPro3* Software for new users – £345; with *PCPro3* upgrade if you return the *PCPro2* disc – £310.

For further information, including other special offers, contact Aleph One at tel: 01223 811 679, or e-mail: laurie@aleph1.co.uk, or check their Web site at http://www.aleph1.co.uk/.

Shouting about CDROMFS

Warm Silence Software (WSS) is introducing a new product, *CDROMFS*, at the Wakefield show in May. *CDROMFS* is a rewritten *CDFS* that claims to offer several significant advantages over *CDFS*. *CDROMFS* supports all the ISO9660 discs that *CDFS* does, including Acorn extensions, multi-session and mixed audio/data formats.

It also supports Joliet and Rockridge formats, and is designed to cope better with 'strange' characters in filenames and disc titles. WSS say tests have shown that navigating a CD using *CDROMFS* is significantly faster than with *CDFS*. The popular UDF packet writing format could be added later in the year if there is enough demand.

For more information, contact Robin Watts at WSS, tel: 0585 487642, e-mail: robin.watts@wss.co.uk, Web: http://www.wss. co.uk

Driving Test Theory gets networked

Exactly a year ago we said in these very pages: "What a good idea – a driving test theory testing program. Learner drivers take note: Room J Software have just released *Question Master – The Driving Test Theory*, a program to help you prepare for the exam on the big day when you hope to say goodbye to that pesky 'L' plate."

Now an improved program is available for use on school networks. The single-user price remains £15, but there is now a site licence for up to 25 users priced £50 and an unlimited site licence for £75. For more information, contact Room J Software, Appletree Cottage, Lower Polladras, Breage, Helston, Cornwall, TR13 9NX, tel: 01736 762541, e-mail: roomj@aol.com



Phoenix on the Web

We've not previously given this Web site an airing on the news pages, but if you haven't already visited http://www.acornusers.org/phoenix/ – it's worth a look. There is a lot of archived material concerning the demise of Phoenix and subsequent regrouping, though it is presented frozen in time, so it sometimes appears very out of date. An interesting browse, nonetheless.

Looking for a job?

Technical and trainee technical staff are being sought by Greater Manchester-based Curriculum Training Associates (CTA), one of the larger Acorn dealers in the country. From what we understand, CTA has some ambitious plans which are not distantly related to the climate being created by the creation of RISC OS Ltd (see other story) and all that entails.

We'll hopefully have more concrete news about CTA's plans next month. If you're interested in CTA's employment opportunities, contact Roy Heslop on tel: 01942 797 777.

!UnixTalk upgraded

A much updated version of *!UnixTalk* a RISC OS implementation of the BSD "ntalk" protocol should be ready about now, according to its author, Marco Baye. The main improvement has been an entire-re-coding of the program from BBC Basic into ARM assembler. Numerous other improvements have been explored in the process. For the latest news on the development of *!UnixTalk*, check http://home.pages.de/~mac_bacon/ntalk/

!ProCAD+ coming soon

!ProCAD+, the successor to the *!ProCAD* package which has established a niche of its own in the RISC OS software market, is due for imminent release by its author, David Snell.

A demo is already available from his web site at http://www.zynet.co.uk/dsnell

Contacting me

You can contact the news page by writing to me Ian Burley at the usual Acorn User address or by e-mail: news@acornuser.com



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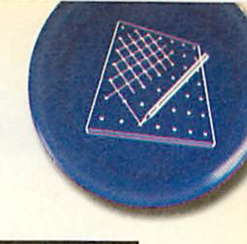


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Top collection

Spacetech make the Graphics page headlines again with yet another release for '99. This time round we're talking 3D and that has to mean some updates all the way from Sincronia in Italy. *!TopModel 2* has undergone further revision to reach version 2.14 and is now available as an update for existing users.

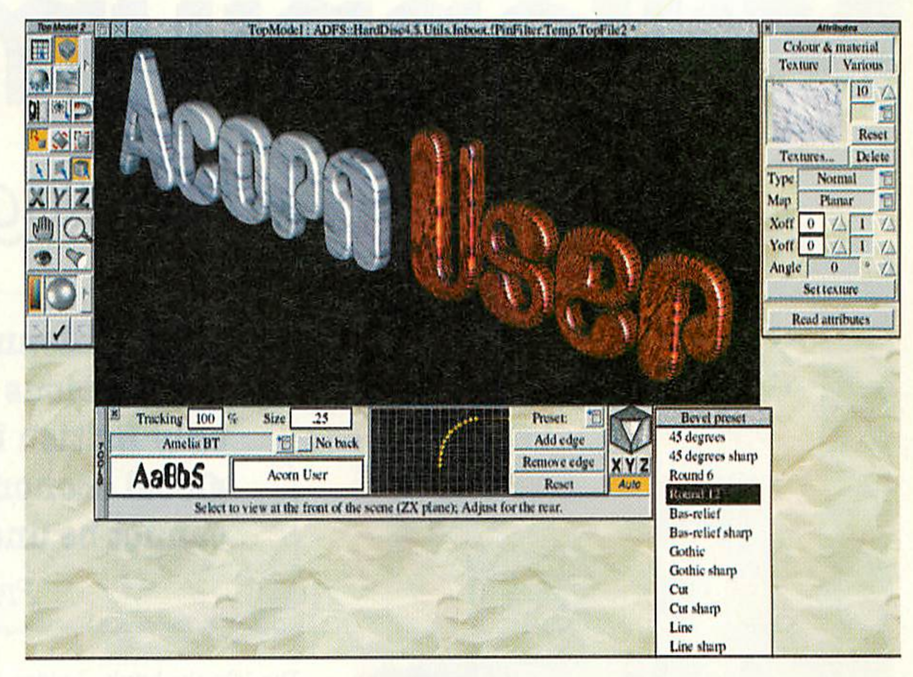
Key improvements include a useful update of the Resource Manager which gives you full control to delete and save views, colours, materials and paths. A very handy addition for the experienced or regular user of the package, where customisation and a tailor-made setup is crucial.

Hand in hand with the Top3DFont plug-in described below is an excellent new bevelling tool which can be found in the Deformation section. This effectively gives you full control over a single plane extrusion. The bevel shape editor provides a graphical pane display of the extruded shape. You can add or remove edges with the click of a button, and adjust their position with single clicks in the pane display.

!TopModel 2 looks for the closest point to the pointer to move, making editing a dream. There's even a set of pre-defined bevels to work from. My only complaint is the omission of the usual help text, but to be honest it's so straightforward to use that it doesn't really matter.

Alongside this *!TopModel* update, is a new support CD. Spacetech are really launching themselves into the CD market and it's great to have all these resources available. By far the most exciting part of the CD is the inclusion of the long awaited 3D font plug-in for *!TopModel*.

Now it's really a shame that we've had to wait so long for such a valuable tool, but Sincronia have certainly done a great job with the implementation. Combining a massive 300Mb of CD based object fonts with the excellent extrusion controls I've described above is a definite winner. My only complaint is in fine tuning a design before you drop it into your scene. With certain fonts, a bit of manual kerning is vital and as the plug-in stands, you have to delete your trial word and keep building new objects until you have the required spacing.



However, given that any given word will often need spacing adjustments on a per-character basis, you usually have to select and drag each character once you've created them. It really would have been handy for the application to automatically group each character when the Font plug-in creates them. Perhaps this is still possible as an upgrade?

The rest of the CD is filled with an interesting variety of support material. For those wishing to put *!TopModel's* Gemini graphics engine to some use, there's a range of technical documents and example BASIC programs. For the ordinary *!TopModel* user there's a collection of textures and 3D models. The textures contain some good material, but with the entire directory clocking in at only 10Mb, it's not enough to keep you going forever. The 3D models fill another 100Mb of the CD, and consist mainly of a large number of Star Wars characters and ships.

There's also a few other random objects, mostly of good quality. With the *TopModel Catalogue* on hand, browsing for the file you want is a doddle (providing you have a CD drive fast enough to keep up). One thing to note however, if running Jason Tribbeck's *!LongFiles* you will be unable to use the Catalogue due to a software clash. When testing this CD I removed *!LongFiles* from my boot sequence and only ran it after I had finished with the Catalogue.

The TopModel CD collection 2 is a good mix of material and with the Top3DFont plug-in you really can't afford to miss out on this valuable disc. The collection is available for £58.63 (including the 2.14 upgrade) from Spacetech.

Contact: sales@spacetech.co.uk
01305 822753

Picture of the month

This month's winner is a vector work that's been handcrafted by Elaine Jones. As Elaine describes "I use *!Vector* in preference to *!Artworks* as I find the layers much more flexible. The daffodil pic uses masses of interpolation to model the petals and create the colour grading. The mould facility in *!Artworks* was used on the partly opened flower and leaves to vary the form." Elaine is looking forward to putting the complete release of the forthcoming *!Vantage* through it's paces and is currently one of the beta-test team. Keep those entries coming for the monthly *!Phantasm* and £15 prize.



Contacting me

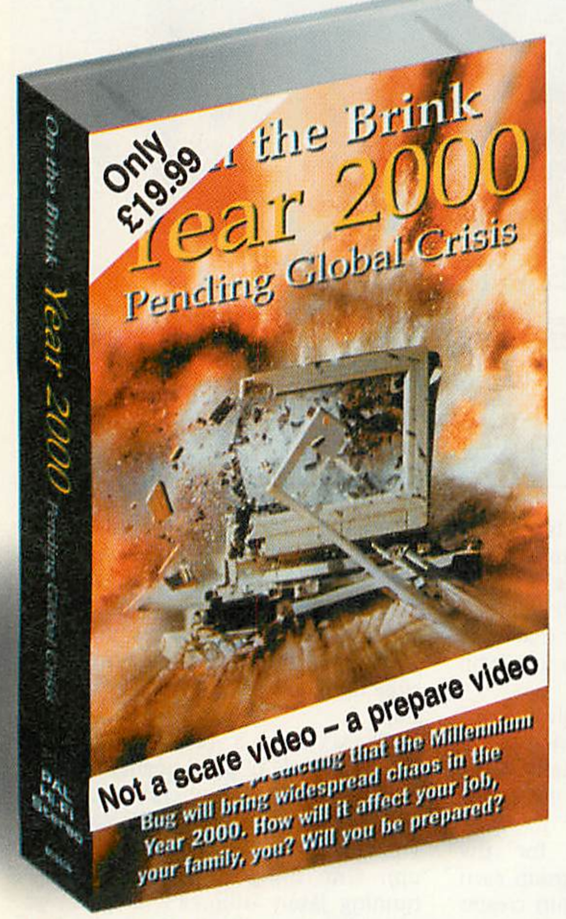
You can contact the Graphics page by writing to me, Paul Wheatley, at Acorn User, Tau Press, Media House, Adlington Park, Macclesfield, SK10 4NP. Or preferably, by e-mail to graphics@acornuser.com



On the brink...

Millennium Bug

Pending Global Crisis



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Lord Sainsbury, Under-secretary for Science



Spreading the word

FreeUK is yet another free Internet service provider offering 25Mb of Webspace, unlimited e-mail addresses, comprehensive newsgroup access and 24-hour technical support costing 50p per minute with no queueing. To join you don't need *Explorer 4*, *JavaScript* or a *Secure Sockets Interface* or hours spent searching the Acorn newsgroups and Web sites for information. Just an Acorn, a Web browser and a little ingenuity.

A quick WHOIS search reveals that ClaraNET UK, a British company that began in 1996 is behind this new venture. FreeUK's manifesto, as they call it, emphasises their core values of equality and freedom of communication. They claim the only charges are the access and technical support phone costs.

If they're relying on the income from the 0845 lo-call rate access number, they'd better watch out. It's been reported that Oftel, the UK Communications regulating body are concerned that ISPs offering lo-call access are clogging the system with long-duration calls it was never meant to support.

To open an account visit their home page at http://www.freeuk.com and go to the Sign Up icon. The next page does contain JavaScript, so save it as HTML and load into an editor. Quickly complete the URL line of your browser to read "http://signup.freeuk.net/index.cgi?ses=" followed by the long number found about 28 lines from the end of the file, and press Return.

Enter all the required details and your chosen username and password on following screens. Save the displayed file of the technical details your software needs to dial in to FreeUK. Your e-mail address is of the form username@freeuk.com, with any other addresses like anything@username.freeuk.com. Accounts will lapse after 90 days without dialling-in.

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FreeUK.COM
http://www.freeuk.com

Next mobile generation

British Telecom is finally to be allowed by the DTI to bid for a stake in the third-generation mobile phone system known as Universal Mobile Telecommunication System (UMTS). This is a worldwide concept that combines the ideas of the wired phone system, (or 'wireline' to use the inevitable new buzzword) with mobile wireless technology to provide complete communications services that are truly personal and portable.

Instead of a handset, the 'mobile' becomes an MMU, a Mobile Multimedia Unit with a built-in camera, colour screen, e-mail and Internet access which will combine mobile phone and notebook technology. A moving mobile radio bandwidth of 144Kbps is planned, rising to 2Mbps with stationary wireless access to networks, and even higher speeds will be possible by plugging into conveniently located network sockets in planes, trains, buses, homes, shops and offices.

The idea is that any network will be accessible from any terminal, and that all the third-generation systems are globally compatible and provide uniform communications. You will be able to phone home, watch sports highlights, view sales catalogues, check your e-mail, surf the Net, catch the latest film trailers and buy cinema tickets wherever you are. Sounds like a lot of fun?

As you might expect, there are currently disputes between US and European manufacturers over standards and specifications of third-generation systems, and there is precious little time to sort it out. Japan is reported to be launching its UMTS network in 2000, and in the UK UMTS is expected to start alongside GSM in 2002, with the rest of Europe using it by about 2005.

I'll be changing my name to Dan Dare, and if you see me talking earnestly into my wristwatch, I'll probably just be rehearsing for UMTS – the Next Generation. Or I may have suffered information overload and gone into a loop.

BT Innovation Showcase
http://innovate.bt.com/showcase/umts/

Virgin on a solution

James Cronin has the answer for *ANT© Internet Suite* users who have been experiencing trouble accessing the virgin.net e-mail server.

James says that the ANT software "uses command buffering which doesn't work in our distributed and load-balanced mail architecture." A simple fix now fully described in the ANT Website *Internet Suite* support FAQ section 4 provides the solution. The suffix "/ucb" is added to the mail server name in the Configuration section of the Suite. Other common problems are covered in these documents which are well worth reading.

ANT Internet Suite FAQs
http://www.ant.co.uk/support/FAQ.html

More mobile messages

Another Acorn 32-bit program for sending SMS (Short Message Service) messages comes from Alex Macfarlane Smith. *!SMSTrans* is a multi-provider system that can send typed-in messages of up to 160 characters to mobile phone subscribers on Cellnet, Vodaphone, One2One, Orange, BTPagers and other networks. *!SMSTrans* features a phrase directory for often-used messages, name-to-number conversion from an editable address book, and a personalised signature. Messages can either be sent immediately or queued and listed for sending in batches.

To join the *SMSTrans* mailing list send an e-mail to subscribe@macfarlanesmith.freeserve.co.uk

!SMSTrans
http://www.macfarlanesmith.freeserve.co.uk/sms.html

CUT call costs

The Campaign for Unmetered Telecommunications (CUT) promotes the introduction of unmetered local voice and data calls for all UK telecommunications subscribers, and for a co-ordinated campaign across the EU.

They emphasise the difference between so-called free local calls where the costs are hidden in line rentals or calling plans, and un-metered local calls which although not expected to be free, should not be bound by time nor data volume. Tim Berners-Lee, in a support statement on the CUT Web site, expresses the idea that the Internet becomes "immeasurably more friendly" when connection is permanent and costs are flat-rate.

Campaign for Unmetered Telecommunications
http://www.unmetered.org.uk/

Contacting me

Keep sending me interesting URLs for the next yoUR List by e-mail to david@arcade.demon.co.uk, or mail #2 on Arcade BBS 0181 654 2212.

spacetech imaging technology

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PHOTODESK 3 *LAYERS* is the package which defines studio quality image editing and artwork on RISC OS machines. It is easy to use but has many powerful features, including **LAYERS** and a sophisticated colour management system (CMS) for the full-time graphics professional. £299.50 **PHOTODESK2** is still available, retaining the CMS but not layers, **now only £199.00)** **PHOTODESK LIGHT,** an economic alternative to PHOTODESK3 retains most of its creative features apart from the Colour Management System, Layers and some features essential to the professional user. £134.75 **Plug-in Effects Packs** are available for all Photodesk packages. Each pack contains 10 special effects: £19.95

Purchasers of Photodesk 3 or Photodesk Light will receive a complimentary CD-ROM of useful resources, utilities and Tutorials. This CD is available to existing users for £24.95.
A *NEW* **CD-ROM** "An Introduction to Digital Art" featuring bitmap and vector graphics tutorials by the well-known artist, David Cowell, is also available for £24.95



Top Model 2.14

A New Version of TopModel2 V.2.14 is now available for £152.75. Existing users may upgrade for £29.95. or buy the NEW CD-ROM packed with resources, the new plug in Top3DFonts! and a free 2.14 upgrade for only £58.63.
TopModel 2 is the definitive 3D modelling package for artists and designers



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digital cameras



PhotoLink is an Acorn multi-driver for the most popular makes of digital camera. Cameras currently supported include the new Olympus range including the fantastic C900 ZOOM, the new replacement for the 840L, theC830L. and the C1400XL SLR Zoom Superb hard copy can be obtained via Epson or Canon PhotoReal. PhotoLink is available on its own at £69.00 or bundled FREE with a camera.

New Prices! C1400XL £849.99 (was £999.99) C830L PHONE! (was £549) C900ZOOM Zoom megapixel compact with Optical AND Digital zoom £649.99



PhotoReal is the Acorn driver extension for the Canon BJC4300, BJC4650, BJC7000, Epson Photo, Photo700 and PhotoEX printers with photo-realistic capability. PhotoReal makes use of the same advanced techniques for producing high-quality four colour separations as Photodesk and comes ready calibrated for the special dye-based inks used for photo-realistic printing. A calibration application is also supplied to allow you to tailor the results to your own specification Driver only £69.00 Inc.VAT. or FREE if purchased with printer! examples: Stylus Photo700 £249.50. Canon BJC4300 £149.95 BJC4650 A3 £299.99. BJC7000 £245, BJC7100 £299.00, Epson PhotoEX A3 £454.73 (all prices include PhotoReal Driver)

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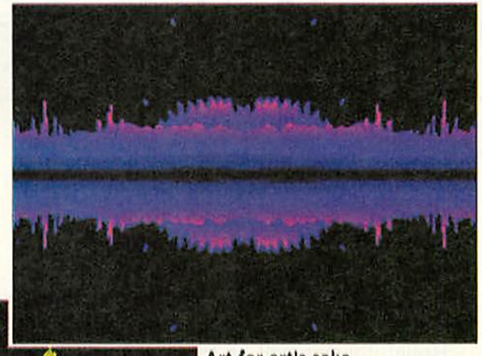


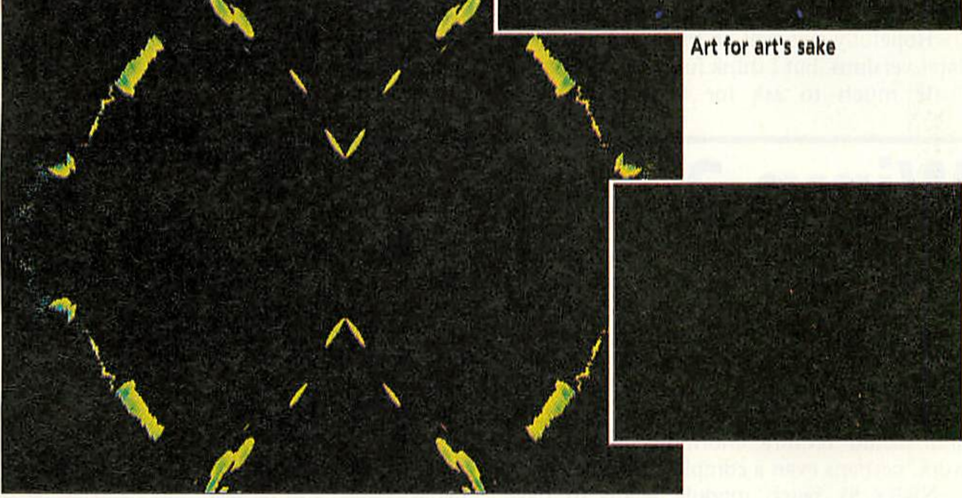
Noises

Providing graphical effects to music has always been a particularly popular use for computers. Ever since running a flickering diamonds effect on a trusty BBC many years ago it's always been an interesting field for me to check out, and judging from the success of music graphics programs on previous *Acorn User* cover disks, a lot of readers like to do the same.

Under RISC OS there have been countless music related effects, and several which have borrowed from the Unix based Cthuga. Until now, there's been nothing close to a complete port, but Andre Timmermans has just released one for the Acorn in the form of *!Noises*.

Cthuga combines an array of simple effects and multi-coloured palettes to produce a seemingly endless graphical accompaniment. From this base, Andre has transformed the program by adding new effects, mode independence, and support for a very wide range of music formats. Other than a few rather annoying pauses after loading some music types it all runs pretty smoothly. Individually the effects aren't incredibly special but as a rapidly changing whole they work well. Andre recommends a StrongARM to get the most out the of the software, but an ARM610 will do if you're prepared to run in lo-res and drop the music quality down little. The original release comes complete with a selection of decent music modes taken from the Net, but it does make this into a rather large download. Noises can be found on the web at http://www.geocities.com/siliconvalley/horizon/4471





Art for art's sake

RiscPCB

The PD world is full of such a variety of quality software, and whether it's Freeware or Shareware it's always incredibly good value for the user. The regularity with which I come across fantastic Freeware programs which could easily stand up as Shareware or commercial releases however, never ceases to amaze me. You really have to appreciate the generosity of PD authors who release such excellent programs for no return, and *!RiscPCB* certainly fits this category.

This is T. Swanborough's first attempt at programming the WIMP and this just goes to show the important requirements for the production of good software – the all important experience of the target area of the program not just good programming skills. In this case *!RiscPCB* is a printed circuit board editor, it facilitates the PCB production process from design through to export as an industry standard Gerber file ready for manufacture. As with many good RISC OS programs, *!RiscPCB* was written following bad experiences with complex PC based packages, and it's the excellent user interface of *!RiscPCB* that really stands out. The application is modelled on *!Draw* and operates with a single editing window and floating toolbox in this familiar manner.

The horizontal toolbox provides buttons for the three main input modes: Pad, Track and Text. Selecting an input mode adds a vertical toolbox to the window providing a simple scale of icons representing the size of the input object. Very straightforward to use and easy to get into straight away. Edit mode

CBase

PD page regular Rick Hudson has released a new PD database application aimed very much, like this month's PCB story, at those computer users also interested in slightly lower level electronics. As Rick describes "It aims to provide an interface for databases of electronic components. It has a sorted index with incremental search and includes package diagrams with pinout information. Hyperlinks to other components are also supported.

Parametric searching is not yet implemented but obviously planned. At present it has a reasonable transistor database (about 4500 BJTs and FETs) and rather skimpy diode and voltage regulator databases. The databases are easily maintainable with a text editor." Check out Rick's web pages at http://home.clear.net.nz/pages/rickh/software/

VoiceCon

Jason Tribbeck has released a beta version of some rather interesting speech recognition software that works with VTI's Parallel Port Sampler or SEMERC's ReSound sampler. As Jason describes "Basically, using several algorithms, a word is stored into 512 bytes. The word is checked against a dictionary of other words, and a score is associated with it (using a fuzzy algorithm). The word with the best score is picked, providing the score is better than a certain mark." Check out the program and associated documentation on Jason's web site at http://www.tribbeck.com

OSLib

Version 5.31 of the popular and immensely useful OSLib sees this valuable resource released with open source under the GNU General Public Licence. Original author Jonathan Coxhead as well as additional coders Richard Sargeant, Tom Hughes and Tony van Hoff are coordinating future development. OSLib provides a handy veneer for simple and clearly understood SWI use from C and Assembler. Check http://www.mk-net.demon.co.uk/

Keep it Real

Acorn users finally have RealAudio support thanks to Kira Brown, Rachel Greenham, Julian Brown and Justin Fletcher. *!RealAudio* v1.01 is available on the web at http://www.neutralino.demon.co.uk/software.html





public domain



Coders Revenge 6 Evolution

DFI coder Paul Thompson's re-launch of the Coders Revenge disk magazine - for the Evolution demo competition - is very much in need of further support to keep the magazine going and the scene moving forward. This special issue provides a whole range of technical tips and scene news but we really can't rely on the same sceners to produce all the material. The whole Evolution competition has really laid down the gauntlet for new teams to come in. I really hope the challenge is taken up. Evolution can be found at http://www.dcs.ed.ac.uk/~pat/dfi.html

Delirium

Version 2.23 of the graphical screen saver is available on the official web site and features a range of updates including password protection. New saver effects have not been as regularly forthcoming as the group had originally planned, but several are still on the way and should be available soon. Point your browser to http://www.various-artists.demon.co.uk/delirium/

Acorn Arcade

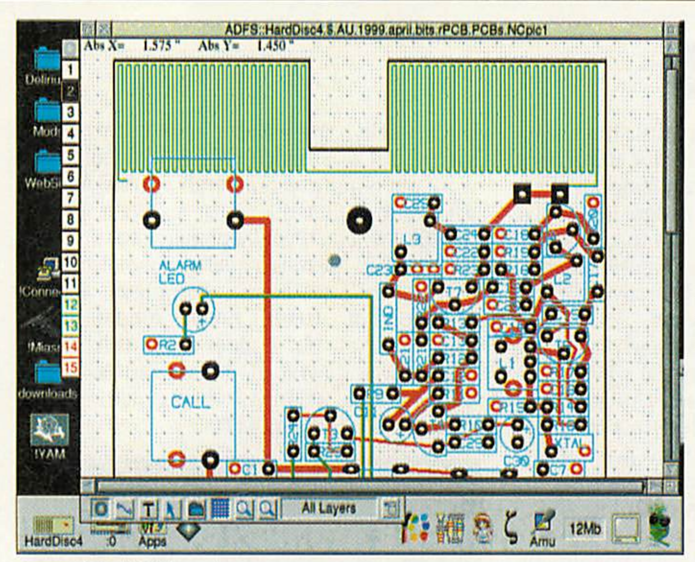
One year on from conception and Acorn Arcade remains a pillar of the games scene, providing all the latest news and more importantly championing all the great effort going into RISC OS PD games. Keep up the good work guys. Browse to http://www.acornarcade.com/

Clearly

!Clear has seen many mentions on the PD page as an invaluable WIMP patch that allows *Windoze* style writable icon selection and deletion, but recent compatibility problems have led to a re-write and new release from author Martyn Fox. Precision movement of the mouse pointer via the cursor keys (as in *!Draw*) is also supported as a new feature of this essential module. Download it from http://www.argonet.co.uk/users/mfox/software/

Contacting me

You can contact the PD page by writing to me, Paul Wheatley, at Acorn User, Tau Press, Media House, Adlington Park, Macclesfield, SK10 4NP. Or preferably, by e-mail (but no large files) to pdpage@acornuser.com



A completed PCB board

is slightly disappointing, allowing only the drag and drop of existing objects. Tracks entered as several joined lines become separate objects in Edit mode rather than a proper path object. Although you can manually group them together to make further changes to the design much easier.

Hopefully this will be improved a little in later versions, but I think full path editing is a little much to ask for from a Freeware application of this kind. The remaining toolbox icons provide a swift access toggle for the grid display, and more importantly an excellent configurable zoom system.

Two zoom buttons can be independently fixed to your required level of detail. Once set, a simple click on the icon bar takes you between a tailored close up view or a zoomed out page. Very simple, but indicative of the common sense that's gone into the interface, and a feature that would certainly be of much use in applications like *!Photodesk*. PCB design is a tricky business and *!RiscPCB* lets you get down to the work without unduly constraining or complicating matters.

With your design complete, your save and export options are also well catered for. As well as native PCB save format and Drawfile export, the crucial feature is the industry standard Gerber and associated application list support. *!RiscPCB* is a fantastic application that goes highly recommended to electronics enthusiasts. Check out the app on Arcade BBS.

Wimp 2

Many said it couldn't be done, but programmer Niall Douglas has proved the dissenters wrong with a piece of code that patches WIMP programs to make them multi-task pre-emptively. Most people on the scene, including Acorn themselves, believed that patching RISC OS in this way was unrealistic and would require enormous amounts of work, perhaps even a complete re-write.

Niall's 8k patch module seems to have proved them all wrong. Running the module and starting tasks followed by the *Wimp2* controller provides almost complete control over where your desktop processing power is going. Managing several different graphical effects in different windows as a quick test allowed me to let one run at nearly full speed, while another ticked over just short of idling. All controlled by *Wimp2*.

It's not all as easy as it sounds however. The module requires each application you use in the desktop that runs under *Wimp2* to use a modified selection of key SWI's like Wimp_Poll and Wimp_Initialise. These applications can either be modified by the authors to make the new *Wimp2* calls, or you can run Andrew Tierney's patch program to automatically modify the SWI calls made by your old apps. The only problem being that not all applications work with the patch, *!Draw* and *!ChangeFSI* being common examples.

But after all the hype and technical arguments, what does it mean for the ordinary user? Not really an awful lot unfortunately. Despite many people professing the benefits of pre-emptive multi-tasking on other machines and moaning at Acorn for not implementing it in new versions of RISC OS, there are few examples of where it actually comes in useful on an existing setup.

Whether *Wimp2* opens the door to a new range of applications that we've so far been denied remains to be seen. More interesting is Niall's suggestion of the ease of adding memory protection to applications and with further development of *Wimp2*, complete multi-threading support. Perhaps these will see the light of day in the future development of RISC OS....

Wimp2 can be located on the web at http://www.nedprod.com/programs/RISC-OS/Wimp2/ Andrew's patch program is at http://homepages.ihug.co.nz/~crackman/wpatch.htm and a software compatibility list maintained by Henry Morgan can be found at http://www.doc.ic.ac.uk/~ham98/wimp2/

Recommended PD Libraries

- APDL, 39 Knighton Park Rd, Sydenham, London SE26 5RN
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- Five Star Marketing, 4 Shepherds Walk, Bushey, Hertfordshire WD2 1LZ

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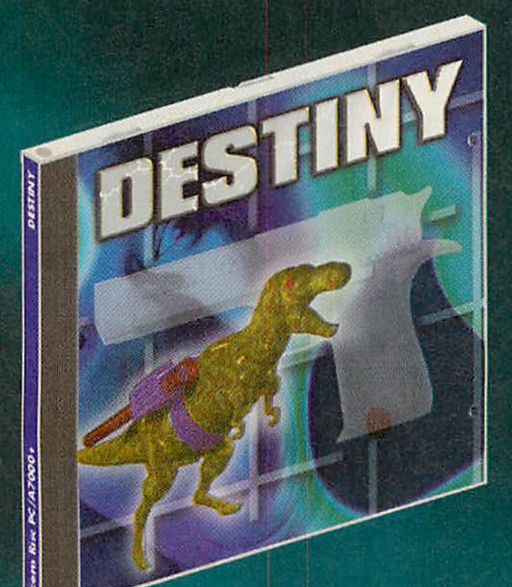
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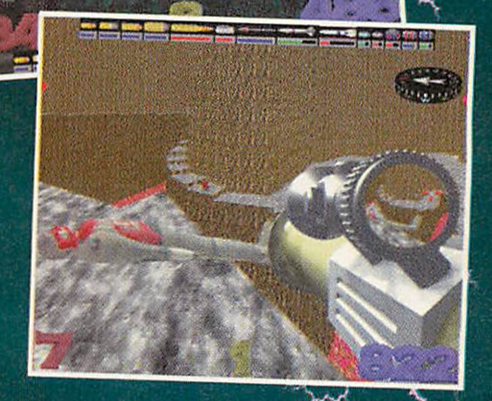


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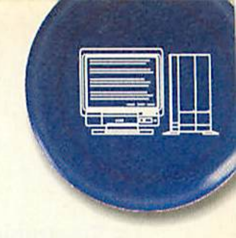
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pc column

Aleph1 tips

This month, Aleph1 suggested I took a look at their superb support pages (www.aleph1.co.uk/AcornProd/Support/) and some of the items covered that may be in the book but which few people read. So here are a couple of highly pertinent suggestions you may find useful.

First off, if you had a real PC you would find that a crashed C_drive is truly serious. Not so bad on *!PC* if you are careful. Why? Because you can easily keep a backup copy of your C_drive somewhere else. When you get a set-up that is stable – keep a copy. If some errant software trashes your system – no problem – copy back the old one. Or perhaps reconfigure *!PC* to boot up the copy, with the old drive_C suitably renamed of course, as your drive_D. Then unless the system has been well and truly trashed the chances are you will be able to find and copy any important files you may need access to.

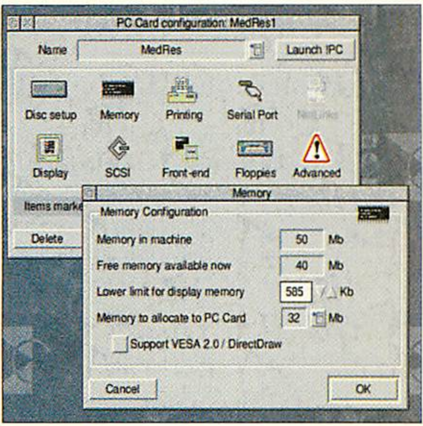
Second, *!PC* now supports multiple configurations. This can have a great many benefits. I use several set-ups to access different D_drives according to what I want to do: these drives may also be used by RISC OS, so to lose them to the PC card every time it's running would often be inconvenient.

But that isn't the limit of it by any means. Each configuration option may have different settings, even a different OS – for example some software may be far happier on a real *DOS* installation than in a *DOS* box run within windows (which is true on real PCs too by the way). So why not have separate C_drives for *DOS, Win 3.1* or *Win95* applications, or even different versions of a windows installation optimised for different purposes. Games, for example, may need some specially tweaked settings to make the best of them.

You can even set up a specific config file where the D_drive is a partition (preferably on another hard drive) specifically set up to be a backup for drive_C. Every now and again you can copy the whole of drive_C to this drive_D and then switch back to a config option where a different drive_D is used, safe in the knowledge your precious installation may be restored easily.

Third, the question of partitions arises frequently especially with the advent of cheaper, larger drives and FAT 32. I will be honest – the intricacies of FATs are beyond me. But basically it boils down to speed of access and the efficiency of disc use. Even a small file will use a minimum amount of space on the disc simply because the FAT (File Allocation Table) can only divide the disc into as many chunks as it has discrete addresses. The bigger the disc – the bigger each chunk will be. The more addresses – the smaller it will be. So a 32-bit FAT is better than a 16-bit FAT.

Until *Win 95/98*, windows was all FAT 16, as is *DOS*. *DOS* can also only cope with 2Gb discs. These days *Win 98* will make it obvious it wants to convert you to FAT 32. But it isn't as simple as that with a PC card. This is Aleph 1's advice:



If you are short of memory, it's easy to have different configurations allocating different amounts according to what you need at the time

Use a smallish C_drive for the OS (whichever you choose) and stick to 500Mb and FAT 16. It's efficient, easy to back up and safe. You are best advised to keep this drive on an IDE device as installing new versions of *!PC* is much easier.

If you want to use FAT 32 for specific apps, set up a D_drive for that purpose but only attempt it if you have *!Win95FS* from Warm Silence Software – which as I've said before is well worth getting anyway.

DOS partitions with !PC Pro3

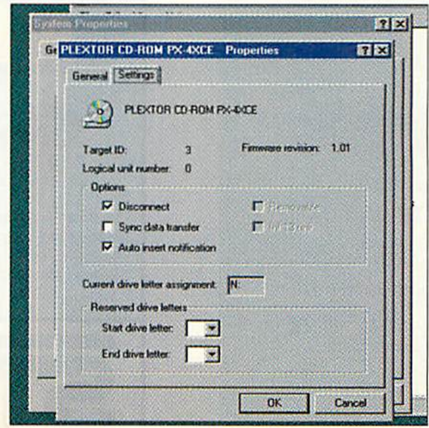
Some further points of interest. *!PC Pro3* now provides for the creation and formatting of *DOS* partitions from the config window. This will only let you create partitions up to 2Gb or 512Mb if you are using RISC OS 3.5 or earlier.

You can use SCSI discs but it is best to reserve these for drive_D (or several different drive_D's if needs be). You can also use the ASPI software to access other SCSI devices, for example removable drives. This machine has a 1Gb Jaz drive that appears in *Win 95* as drive_D or _E according to whether a drive_D is specified in config. This means the PC card could have access to unlimited hard drive space.

Some PC software, of course, hates having drives renamed – shortcuts are the worst as they specifically to the drive number. This can be a real pain if you use a CD-ROM as most of us do. If the drive letter changes, the system gets all confused and can't find files even if you click on the CD to 'show' *Windows* that it's there. There is a solution for CDs. If you go into MyComputer/ Control Panel/System/ Device Manager and double click on 'CDROM' you should see your drive(s) listed. You can now highlight one and choose 'properties'. In there under 'settings' you can reserve one or more letters for your CD-ROMs. Let's say you choose 'M' and onwards, unless you really load up with new hard drives the CD drives are no longer in danger of being renamed and your CDs will load – once you've re-installed them of course!

More next time

I had intended to do some stuff about linking up computers this month – using the serial port for direct cable connection and so on. But then I found neither the inbuilt serial port nor the one on an Atomwide card would function as desired and I didn't have much time to trace the problem – my real PC croaked too and is back at the assemblers probably getting a new motherboard. Never mind, I will attempt to suss all that out and report back next time around.



This is where you reserve letters for CD roms

Contacting me

You can contact me, Mike Buckingham, by post at: Acorn User, Media House, Adlington Park, Macclesfield SK10 4NP or by dropping me an e-mail at: pcpage@acornuser.com



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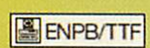
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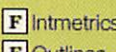
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Network Links Software for **one user**	£20

Our Web page on Benchmarks shows the tiny effect of a larger cache or a 133MHz processor; the processor we offer here has a heat sink fitted and does not need a fan DirectX/VESA support does not generally benefit from more than 128Kb cache anyway.

Aleph One Limited
The Old Courthouse, Bottisham, CAMRIDGE CB5 9BA
Tel: 01 223 811 679 Fax: 01 223 812 713
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cover disc



Drawing the line

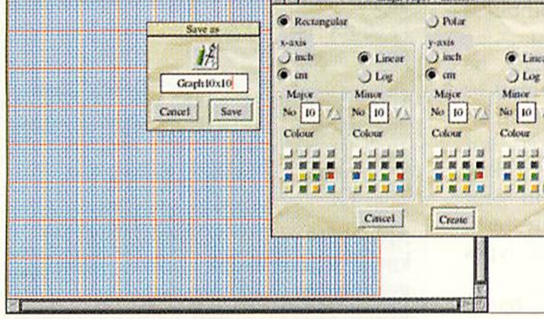
!GrphPaper creates graph paper, it's very simple. It's also rather useful, I had a good old play with this program and was pleasantly surprised at how well laid out and well thought out it is. It doesn't actually place figures or numbers on the axis because that's not it's job, it's just there to save you the considerable bother of creating complex grids in *!ArtWorks* or *!Draw* which on the slower machines can become very frustrating.

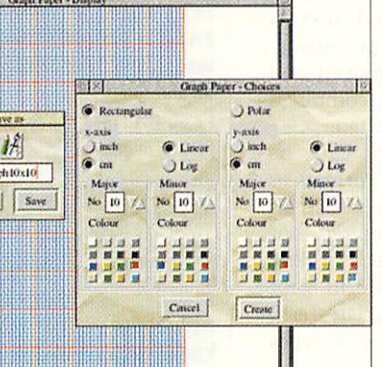
!GrphPaper provides full control over the finished product allowing you to choose the colour and number of the major and minor lines, and whether the spacing is in centimetres (cm) or inches. You can also choose between rectangular or polar paper and linear or logarithmic scales.

The program installs to the iconbar, where clicking with select on the icon opens a window enabling the type of graph and other choices to be made. Clicking with adjust on the iconbar icon will open the display window if a file has already been created.

Choices Window

Clicking on the Create button will create a drawfile and display it in the display window. If you click using Select the choices window will close, if you use adjust the choices window will stay open.





Display Window

Clicking the menu button in the display window will present a File Save dialogue box from where the resultant drawfile can be saved. Clicking with select in the display window will close the display window.

Clicking with adjust will open the choices window so you can make further changes.

One thing to note, when viewing the finished drawfile you will see that the lines are not grouped. This means that if you want to position the graph paper on a page, ensure that 'select all' and 'group' are chosen before the lines are moved.

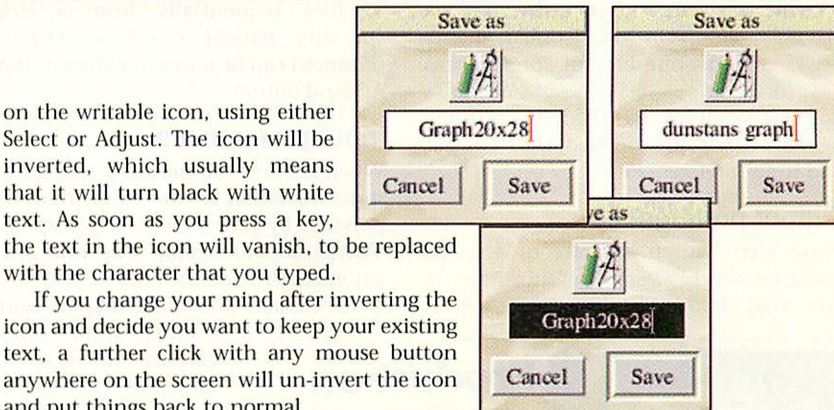
Any reports of bugs, or ideas for improvements should be directed to the author, Victor Markwart on the other side of the world in Wanniassa, Australia (markwart@pcug.org.au)

IClear

This is the latest version of the *IClear* module, by Martyn Fox (mfox@argonet.co.uk), which makes it easier to delete text from a writable icon. Under RISC OS, to replace the text in such an icon with new text, you first have to either delete all the characters of the old text or press Ctrl-U to clear it.

This can be a nuisance, especially if you have just selected the icon with the mouse, as you first have to transfer to the keyboard, then press Ctrl-U before you can type in your new text. With *IClear* running, simply double-click on the writable icon, using either Select or Adjust. The icon will be inverted, which usually means that it will turn black with white text. As soon as you press a key, the text in the icon will vanish, to be replaced with the character that you typed.

If you change your mind after inverting the icon and decide you want to keep your existing text, a further click with any mouse button anywhere on the screen will un-invert the icon and put things back to normal.



Disc information

The software on the cover disc has been compressed using !ArcFS 2 from VTi, and are opened by running a copy of ArcFS then double-clicking on the archive to open it. There is a copy of !ArcFS on each disc.

Most software will run straight from the archive, but some programs may need to be copied out of the archive before being run, uncompressing them in the process. Any program that saves a file to disc, for instance, will be unable to do so into the archives on the disc.

Faulty disc?

If your disc is faulty, test whether it will verify by clicking with Menu on the floppy drive icon and choosing Verify.

If it fails to verify or is physically damaged you should return it to *TIB, TIB House, 11 Edward Street, Bradford, Yorkshire BD4 7BH*. If it verifies successfully return it to the *Acorn User* editorial office at the usual address.

The *Acorn User* cover discs have been checked for viruses using !Killer version 3.001 from Pineapple Software.

Freeware

- *!GrphPaper* — produce your own graph paper
- *IClear* — easier writable icons
- *!WBModules* — *now* you can run *!CassInlay*
- *!CLIPS* — RISC OS port of CLIPS program

Regular & Features

- FreeUK provider files
- Light pens with Mike Cook
- All the Java tutorial files
- All the *INFO programs

THOUSAND word picture

Trevor Attewell explores the latest incarnation of the Sleuth OCR

Beebug have closed their retail department, but they still sell and support their major software. One of these is *!Sleuth3*, their latest Optical Character Recognition (OCR) application, developed from *!Sleuth2*. It reads text supplied to it in the form of a sprite, obtained by scanning the original text. The output is a text file, selectable from several types. OCR is an invaluable tool when printed material must be transferred to computer files, the only alternative being to type it in by hand.

Most scanners, both flatbed and hand-held, capable of sprite outputs at resolutions of 300 or 400dpi, are likely to be satisfactory. For example, Computer Concepts' *Scanlight Video256* hand scanner and Irlam's *Colour Mobile* were both tried with good results. The former includes useful features for improving the scanned image quality. The latter has a motorised scan which makes it easy to produce straight and parallel lines of text. *!Sleuth3* will also work directly with the TWAIN interface.

The text sprite should be black on a white background for the best results, but greyscale Sprites are accepted. White text on a black background can be inverted via an Edit option in the iconbar menu. There are a number of preferences covering various aspects of *!Sleuth3*'s operation, all of which have sensible defaults. They are divided into Output and Input preferences.

Output preferences

These start with the choice of a single character which *!Sleuth3* will substitute for any that it cannot identify. Special characters are available to force carriage returns, linefeeds, and spaces at ends of lines, useful if the recovered text is intended for subsequent DTP processing. Hyphens at line ends can be removed, and ligatures (where *ff* and *fi* are combined into a single symbol) are supported.

The output text format can be Editable, Text, RTF (Rich Text Format) or Append. Editable text can be edited in other software packages as required, but Text is simply an ASCII file. An RTF option will map fonts available in your *!Fonts* directory to the appropriate serif, sans serif or mono-spaced generic types known to *!Sleuth3*.

The last output option is Batch Processing, which will process a number of files sequentially from a single, specially named directory. The files produced can be joined together, using an Append option.

Input preferences

When starting you must tell *!Sleuth3* what sprite resolution you have used from those provided by your scanner. If you are using TWAIN it will supply this information automatically. Ideally lines of text in the sprite should be straight and horizontal, reading from top to bottom. However it is sometimes necessary to scan text sideways, especially when working from books, the binding of which may obstruct the scanner. An Auto Page Orientation option will make *!Sleuth3* rotate the resulting text as necessary.

With greyscale sprites the darkest shade of grey that should be treated as white can be specified, by selecting the shade from a greyscale displayed in the window. This helps to distinguish letters from background. There is also a pre-sharpening option to help with poorly defined text.



Production programmer

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www.lloydres.co.uk

Enquiry number 905

Scan of the original, converted to greyscale

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ADAPTORS) to gang program
a wider range of
microcontrollers than any other
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```

Uncorrected text from Sleuth3

Quite a linguist

!Sleuth3 now supports English, German, French and Dutch, selectable from a Language option. There is also a Learned menu, which lists the character sets known to *!Sleuth3*. These comprise 29 fonts, each in four styles (except Benguiat, which has two), all supplied by the Electronic Font Foundry. Similar fonts not in this list may also be recognised, if less accurately.

When using RTF format you can choose the set most likely to be useful for the job in hand, for example if the text is in more than one language. The sets include fax, numerical characters and the four languages, with English as the default.

Two optional checks can be used on the output characters. The first is Context, which makes *!Sleuth3* compare similar characters by reference to the adjoining text, for example a zero against a capital "O". The second check compares every

word against a built-in dictionary. There is also a User Dictionary which allows you to add words - essential where specialised text is involved. Unwanted words can be removed.

The gain in accuracy obtained by these checks must be weighed against the time they take. Hence the preferences include a three-speed choice - Careful, Medium or Quick. The usage of these is plain, and Medium is usually a good compromise.

Of the last two items in this window one sets the proportion of the time that *!Sleuth3* may use when multitasking. Finally, some scans may contain images with embedded text, often in small print. *!Sleuth3* should skip these, but an option to ignore any text below a specified point size also helps.

Into the zone

Of the items on this menu, two refer to general preferences and dictionary editing, dealt with above. Another minimises the amount of memory used by *!Sleuth3*, albeit with some reduction in speed. There is an option to stop an ongoing OCR process if you suspect that all is not well, or wish to change settings. Any completed text is then lost.

It is unfortunate that *!Sleuth3*, unlike *!Sleuth2*, does not display what it is doing until it has finished. It does tell you how fast it is working, which line it is working on, and how it rates its accuracy, about which it tends to be modestly pessimistic.

Sometimes text may need to be recovered from a complex original which is a conglomeration of text, images and embellishments. Such images sometimes contain text, which may, or may not, be wanted. *!Sleuth3* will try to pick out the text most likely to be required, but it cannot read your mind. "Zones" are designed to deal with such cases.

They are rectangular windows which can be drawn and sized over areas in the Sprite to define what is to be read, and what should be ignored. By default the wanted text is dealt with in the order in which the zones were drawn, but you can change this order. Zones may overlap, but cannot be stacked one above another.

In the latest version, *!Sleuth3* can also draw zones for itself, and usually comes up with a reasonable set. These can be edited if necessary. All zones can be saved for re-use in other similar pages.

Zones are controlled from a *!Draw*-like menu, with keyboard short-cuts. Each zone (or a combination) can be selected, after which it can be deselected, deleted, copied, or ignored, all of which options, except the last, behave like their counterparts in *!Draw*. There are two further options, namely Single Column and Table. The first is useful if there are wide gaps between sections or lines of text in a zone, which might cause them to be handled incorrectly.

The Tables option attempts to render the contents of a zone as a table, which it might well be. The result is stored as a CSV (comma separated variables) file, which you must edit manually. Only very basic tables with one line of data per row can be handled.

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Final text can have styles

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Final text after correction

Yellow corrections

When an OCR operation is complete the text appears in the output window for editing. Mistakes are highlighted in yellow, but some of these will not be errors, and were marked because *!Sleuth3* could not find them in the dictionaries. Examples include technical terms, abbreviations, and names. Rarely, words may be accepted as correct when they are not. For example, the word "last" might be rendered as "lost", which passes the dictionary test. Only you can spot such cases.

Editing is easy, simply using the keyboard. The original word is displayed for comparison in case *!Sleuth3*'s version is unrecognisable. If incorrect words appear more than once in the document, an Other Occurrences option shows how many times, and will correct all of them automatically. There is also a useful provision to add any highlighted word to the dictionary.

Sometimes it is handy to have short cuts for moving the caret when editing, and a list of these is in the manual. Manipulating paragraphs is routine, using Return, Delete and Copy, as in any wordprocessor.

Screen grabs showing *!Sleuth3* at work are reproduced here. They show how it handled a fairly difficult scan from a magazine advertisement, for which *!Sleuth3* supplied its own zones. Of the three it created, one was manually altered to "ignore". The result contained all the specified text in the right order, with some correct "errors", but *!Sleuth3* was noticeably unhappy with the Web and e-mail addresses.

A direct comparison was made between *!Sleuth3* and *!Sleuth2* (v2.09), using a Risc PC 600 with StrongARM, and a simple text original of about 100 words. *!Sleuth2* was faster, finishing in 11 seconds. However, it made no less than 24 genuine errors. *!Sleuth3* took 12s on "Medium" with three actual mistakes. On "Careful" it took 16s with two errors.

Summary

!Sleuth3 is fairly intuitive in use, and offers a good range of features. It improves on *!Sleuth2*, particularly in its error rate, and the selectable trade-offs between speed and accuracy are very useful. *!Sleuth3* is slower than *!Sleuth2* in its "Careful" and "Medium" modes, but when the reduced need for manual corrections is taken into account, it is effectively much quicker.

Whereas *!Sleuth2* limits the original Sprite to black and white modes, with square pixels, *!Sleuth3* can cope with up to 256 colour modes, adding considerably to its flexibility. These considerations justify a very positive recommendation. AU

Product details

Product:	!Sleuth3
Price:	£116.32 fully inclusive
Supplier:	Beebug Ltd, 117 Hatfield Road, St. Albans, Herts, AL1 4JS
Tel:	01727 840303
Fax:	01727 860263
E-mail:	sales@beebug.co.uk

Showroom open Mon-Sat 10-18.00 hrs (All prices INCLUDE VAT) Carriage not included

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- The Peak Performer incl. Teko 14" Monitor, Spkrs + one Software Bundle			
- Foundation Bundle - StartWrite, Darryl the Dragon, Maths, Gordon's Groovy Granny, TinyArt, Acorn Exploror, King Arthur.			
- Extreme Bundle - StartWrite, Resultz, Rhapsody2, Pandora's Box, The Big Picture, Taskforce Clipart CD.			
RiscPC SA233 4MHD1.2+8xCD (SRP21)	£1050	£1315	£940
RiscPC SA233 10MHD1.2+24xCD (SRP26)	£1225	£1485	£1115
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RiscPC 34MHD1.7Gb+32CD Web Wizard	£1350	N/A	N/A
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[1] - ISDN line and ISP account not included. [2] - Each connected computer must be equipped with a 10BaseT network card.
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Syndicate+ for RiscOS £26a
- A5000 - RiscPC with 8Mb RAM & CD-ROM

Frak for RiscPC/A7000 £14a
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TDK 650M CD-R discs (Box10)	£15b
TDK 650Mb CD-RW disc	£14a

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Jaz 2Gb External	£305c
Jaz cartr. 1Gb £68/2Gb	£73a

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ANT Internet Suite II	£110a
Dual Serial Card	£104b
9-25 Archi or PC Wired Modem Cable	£12ea.a
3-way Serial T-Switch (incl. comm. cable)	£32b

Scanners (Carriage £8)

ScanLight Video 256	£50
- suitable for A3000-A4000 (Only One left)	

Epson Colour Scanners
Include !TWAIN & ImageMaster for RiscOS. Bundles include software for PC's/PC Cards

GTx-7000 SCSI bundle	£245
GTx-9500 Para bundle	£615
GTx-9500 SCSI bundle	£645

Hardware Upgrades

160W Stereo Speakers	£15c
- Incredibly good sound at the price	
Citizen HD Floppy Drive	£25b
- Suitable for all machines except A3000, A300 - A400, A540 series machines. Please note - this drive respects the HD hole explicitly ie - you cannot format HD discs to DD & vice ver.	
Dual Serial Card	£104b
FPA for 25MHz ARM3	£30a
Joystick I/F (Not RiscPC)	£20a
Logitech Mouse (Acorn)	£29a
Scart Cable (9 or 15 pin)	£12a
Serial Upgrade (A3000)	£27a

Books (No VAT)

Carriage: a=£2, b=£6, c=£8,

RiscOS3 PRM(1only)	£60.00c
PRMVolume 5a	£29.75c
BBC Basic VI Guide	£19.95b
RiscPC TechRefMan	£49.95c
Budget DTP (Dabs)	£5.00a
RiscOS 3 First Steps	£5.00a
Wimp Progr for All	£10.00a

CD-ROM Software

RisCafe (JAVA)	**£39.00a**
ArtWorks on CD (CC)	£105b
ClipArt CD 1/2 (CC)	£21a each
Hutchinsons Encyclopedia 92 for RiscOS	£6a
Hutchinsons Encyclopedia 97 for PC only	£5a
Musical Instruments (MS)	£50a
RiscDisc Vol 1, 2 or 3 CD	£10a each
TopicArtCD (DTP)	£5a
TOTS TV CD	£19a
Typography Font CD	£30a
Ultimate Human Body (DK)	£50a

Games (Carriage £2)

Prices below whilst stocks last

Abuse (A7000 - RiscPC)	**£22a**
Alone in the Dark (Krisalis)	£34a
Birds of War (4D) 2Mb	£30a
B H P (TBA)	£28a
Break 147/Superpool (4D)	£18a
Crystal Maze (Sher) Floppy £28 / CD	£28a
Cyber Chess (4D)	£16a
Descent CD (RiscPC 8Mb)	**£27a**
Doom+ CD (A5000-RPC only)	**£30a**
Drifter (4D)	£18a
Dungeon (4D)	£18a
Dune II (floppy) (Eclipse)	£27a
E-Type II (4D)	£18a
Fire & Ice (Times Warner)	£23a
Frak (A7000/RiscPC)	£14a
Heroes of Might & Magic II NEW!!	**£32a**
Krisalis Collection	£28a
Lotus Turbo Chall2 (Kris)	£26a
Magic Pockets (Reneg)	£22a
Real McCoy 2/3/4/5 (4D)	£18a each
Saloon Cars Deluxe (4D)	£18a
Scrabble (US Gold)	£26a
Simon the Sorcerer 2Mb	£27a
Spobbleoid Fantasy (4D)	£18a
Stunt Racer 2000 (4D)	£18a
Syndicate+	**£26a**
Virtual Golf (4D) 2Mb	£18a
Wolfenstein 3D	**£5a**
- Now compatible with RiscPC+StrongARM	

Printer Consumables

Carriage: £2 for Cartridges, £8 for Toner

Canon		Epson	
BC-01	£15	S020047 Black	£19
BC-02	£16	S020089 Colour	£19
BC-05	£25	S020093 Black	£19
BC-06	£Call	S020108 Black	£19
BC-20	£23	S020189 Black	£19
BCI-21Bk	£8	S020191 Colour	£19
BCI-21C	£15	**Hewlett Packard**	
BC-21	£33	HP51625A Colour	£24
BC-22 Photo Cart	£39	HP51626A Black	£23
BCI-60 Black	£25	HP51629A Black	£23
BCI-61 Colour	£18	HP51649A Colour	£24
BJI-201HCbk Black	£9	C3903A (LJ5P/6P)	£64
BJI-201bk Black	£6	HP92274A (LJ4L)	£54
BJI-201C/M/Y	£8 ea.	**Ink Refills**	
BJI-642 Black	£13	Single Black	£5
BJI-643 Black	£18	Single C/M/Y/R/G/B	£5
BJI-643C/M/Y	£23 ea.		
EP-L (LBP-4)	£64		

Applications

ANT Int. Suite	£110a	ArcFax	£31a
ArtWorks (CC)	£104b	Card Shop	£23a
Compression	£31a	DataPower2	£165b
DrawWorks Des	£27a	Eureka v3	£105b
FastSpool+	£18a	HTML Edit 4+	£47a
ImageFS2	£43a		
MidiWorks Light	£30a	PC Pro v2	£38a
PC Pro v2 + Exch	£46a	Personal Acc'ts	£45a
PhotoDesk2	£200b	PsiRisc	£67a
SiteSeer	£Callb	SparkFS	£24a
StrongGuard	£24a	Web Design T'kit	£28a

Educational (Carr. £2)

10/10 Series £14a each
Early Essentials (over 7), English (6-16yrs), French (8-16yrs), Junior Essentials (5-11), Maths (Number) (6-16), Maths (Algebra) (6-16), Maths (Statistics) (6-16), Maths (Geom'y) (6-16), Spelling (over 9), Essential IT, Geog.,

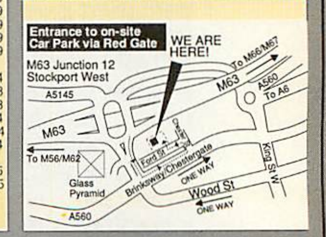
FunSchool3 (u5, 5-7, or over 7)	£22a
FunSchool4 (u5, 5-7, or over 7)	£22a
Maths Circus (4Mation)	£28a
Playdays (Gamesware)	£24a
Wizards Revenge	£18a

Terms & Carriage

Carriage: a=£2, b=£6, c=£8

Carriage: To benefit personal callers to our showroom carriage is itemised seperately. The carriage indicated is for single items. Please call us for total carriage when ordering more than one item since it is not cumulative.
Terms: All prices include VAT except books. Carriage is not included unless otherwise stated. Carriage charges apply to mainland UK (excluding remote areas, Scottish Highlands, Chann Isles, IOM), elsewhere at cost. Orders MUST be accompanied by a phone number. Prices and spec's subject to change without notification. Goods subject to availability. Goods not offered on trial basis. Restocking fee on non-faulty returns. Educ Inst official orders accepted. E&OE.

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Acorn Centres of Technology



Apr 99



Presenting *a good case*

Mike Tomkinson looks at !OHP and gives a few presentation tips of his own

In these times of doom and gloom in the Acorn world it is easy to bemoan our lot, but one of the areas in which we certainly have a good choice of software is the focus of this review and that is presentation software.

It's a long time since my comparative review of this area - *Acorn User* October 1996, but this is not a comparative review but a look at a completely new piece of software called *!OHP* from Spacetech - the *!Photodesk* people. Originally I looked at *!Noticeboard*, *!Portfolio* and *!CableNews II*. These are all still available but note that *!CableNews II* is now marketed by Lindis International on (01728) 663520.

!OHP arrived on a CD-ROM which surprised me somewhat as I am still not used to seeing software for Acorns distributed in this way. It certainly is the way to go, the limitations of floppy discs and their drives in terms of capacity are too well known. I am not advocating bloatware as is common on the PC but CDs remove the need for compression and the subsequent possible problems that can stem from this approach to software release. There is no printed manual - it is on the CD as an HTML document so navigation is nice and easy. There is also a web browser (*!WebsterLT*) so that you can access the pages.

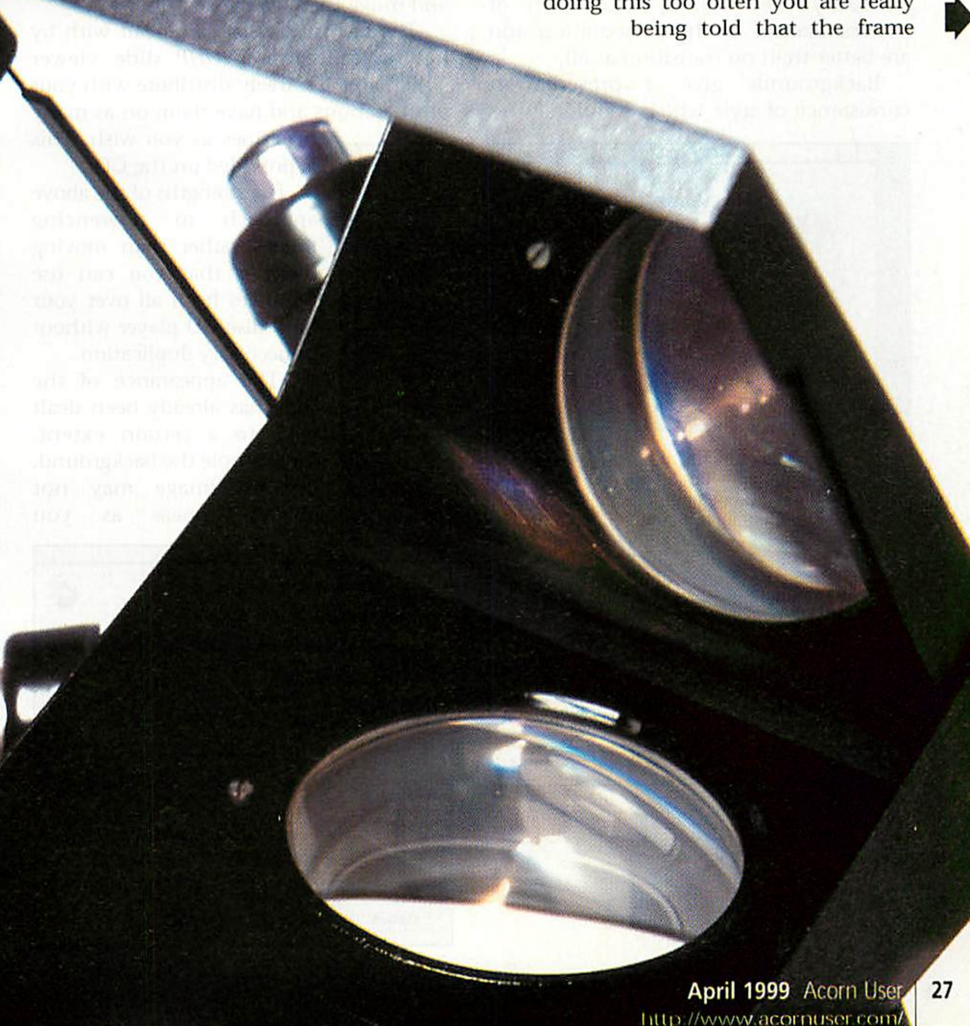
There are plenty of example presentations in the *!OHP* Demo and *!OHP* Show directories on the CD and a good look at these before doing anything else is worthwhile - not because they are particularly good but rather to show you what can be achieved before going on to produce something better.

The accompanying blurb states that *!OHP* is intended as an electronic overhead projector, it is not a sophisticated multimedia authoring tool - it is designed to be quick and very easy to use. Well I can certainly agree with that - it is not multimedia but it is quick and easy.

I had my first three frame presentation knocked up in about two minutes. Nothing very sophisticated but I have nearly always found that presentations are required yesterday and quite often the day before that. Speed can be very important. The process of frame construction could not be easier as the main tools are available to all Acorn users - *!Draw* and *!Paint*.

You can use almost anything else which produces an image and almost any other image format but that will only be worthwhile if you require a more complex or sophisticated presentation. Throughout this review I have included some useful tips for budding presenters.

Generally a frame will consist of a background, some text - preferably bulleted, a graph or chart, and/or a picture. Keep it simple, clear, clean and crisp. You can vary the order in which frames are shown and go back to previous frames to emphasise a point or explain at greater length but if you find yourself doing this too often you are really being told that the frame





has failed to make its point in the first place – go back to square one and follow the KISS principle (Keep It Simple Stupid).

You can also vary the length of time the frame is shown according to its complexity – a graph may require longer to explain than a few bulleted points. This is useful if you have a timed commentary running alongside your presentation. It looks really impressive if just as you have finished making a point the presentation automatically moves forward. Of course, this requires practice and rehearsal.

Most presentations use a variety of effects as you move from one frame to the next – so called transitions, and a number of these are provided by *!OHP*: covers, wipes and dissolves. While not strictly necessary they add a nice touch of professionalism to the presentation and are better than no transition at all.

Backgrounds give a presentation consistency of style which should always be present and although there are a number provided in the Background Gallery it is almost as easy to make your own or adapt the existing ones. Again these should not detract from the presentation by distracting the audience from the message.

So far, so good. All the features I would expect of any presentation package. Unlike some packages it is not a requirement of *!OHP* to collect all the frames into one directory or series of sub-directories.

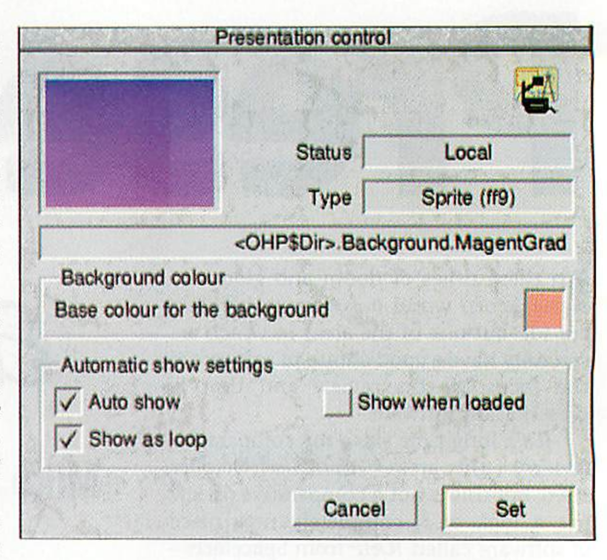
When the frames are dragged and dropped onto the presentation script window they are displayed but not physically moved to that location. Only the reference to their location on the hard disc or CD-ROM is retained. You must therefore be careful about moving frames about on your hard disc or renaming files and directories; otherwise *!OHP* will not be able to find the frame by reference to its expected location. Not a problem in most cases but moving a presentation to another machine and expecting it to run is not possible unless you group the presentation with its associated frames and move them *en masse*.

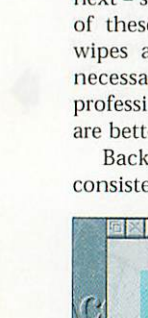
The licensing issues are dealt with by having a freeware *!OHP* slide viewer which you can freely distribute with your presentations and have them on as many machines as you wish. This is provided on the CD.

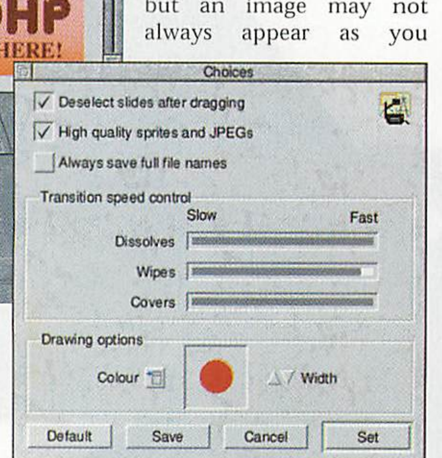
The strengths of the above approach to referencing frames rather than moving them is that you can use resources from all over your hard disc/CD player without unnecessary duplication.

The appearance of the slide has already been dealt with to a certain extent, for example the background, but an image may not always appear as you expect. In particular the proportions of the screen and the image may not match. You may have space at the sides or top and bottom of the screen. Here you have a choice of stretching the image to the sides/top/bottom, which may distort the image, or you can maintain the proportions and fill the space with a background of your choice. It is rather like putting a graphic in an *!Impression* frame with its fit-to-frame option except in this case *the screen is* your frame.

You can preview your work in progress and nothing becomes fixed until you opt to save your work. Even then you alter it, but be careful about moving things around on your hard disc – remember that *!OHP* works by reference to a files location when it is dragged and dropped onto the presentation script window. Another form of presentation at which *!OHP* would excel



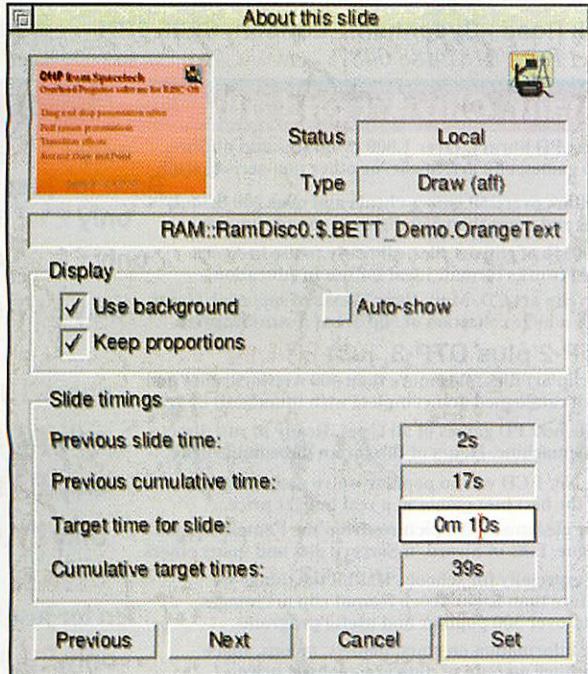






- An effective presentation should only contain three or four main points. Any more and your audience will not remember them
- Use bulleted and/or numbered lists to organise your ideas
- If giving a commentary do not read out exactly what the slide says – let your audience read for themselves
- Use a common background or logo to give your slides a sense of unity
- Use no more than 5 lines of text per frame...
- ...and no more than 8 words per line
- Plan – get to know the audience and where your presentation will be given – you should look comfortable in the surroundings
- Think – are you the best possible person to give the presentation? Do you know someone who would be more effective?
- Proofread your work or better still get someone else to do it





is what I call the Point of Sale presentation. Here a continually rolling demonstration of a product or service accompanies a stand, often at an exhibition – usually on a large monitor.

I am sure you have seen this sort of thing – some exhibitors at Acorn shows use them. With the increased method of capture available – video cameras, digital cameras and scanners – it is possible to produce a very professional and polished product without recourse to professional prices.

The almost ubiquitous digital camera has opened up this area to almost anyone. It is interesting to note that most SOHO (Small Office, Home Office) PCs are now sold as some form of complete solution bundle including a digital camera, colour printer and scanner.

These SOHO multimedia solutions are a marketing area never really tried by Acorn or Xemplar.

Images and clip-art are an area for which the Acorn range knows no equal. With conversion software and the wide range of native formats we can probably exploit a wider range of images than either the PC or the Mac. My personal favourite collection is the Task Force Really Big collection of over 10,000 images – more than enough to brighten any presentation.

The real highlight of *!OHP* is the amount of work you can do to the presentation "on-the-fly". This is difficult to demonstrate but the amount of control you have over the presentation at any time, so that you can alter or fine tune a particular frame, presentation or move from one frame to the next gives you enormous flexibility. The only real downfall in this area is that the choice of background colour is applied universally to all slides instead of just the one selected. Of course you can set the backgrounds of each slide individually but it would be nice to be able to select individual slides and apply the background colour locally to that slide.

I tried, as with all review software, to push it to the limits and beyond. I was a little surprised to find that *!ArtWorks* files were not supported by the software – not that it claims to support them. It is possible to save an *!ArtWorks* file as a drawfile so that solves that particular problem.

Another feature of *!OHP* I particularly liked was the degree of Object Linking and Embedding employed between the main program and the imported object. I suppose this is a function of the fact that the main *!OHP* program stores the location of the file and not the actual file. In practice it means that if, for example, you load a drawfile and a background from a clip-art collection – I used one from the Click Art collection – and it does not fit the frame exactly you can choose to edit the original, in *!Draw*, which is then saved into *!OHP*.

A little experimentation is required to get the ratios right but it not difficult. This method of OLE is invoked by Control + double-clicking the object you wish to edit. I did manage to crash the



program by trying this method with JPEGs but at this point I was really pushing the program beyond its limits. The problem was caused by *!OHP* not having "seen" a program to open up the JPEG in – something like *!ChangeFSI* on the iconbar means no crashes.

So, to the bottom line. *!OHP* is an excellent presentation program, well presented, easy to use, versatile and it would make a good starting point for anyone requiring this type of software. It does not set out to be true multimedia for which it would require support for animation, moving pictures and sound. If that is your requirement then you need to look elsewhere.

However, you need to think very carefully about your initial requirements – too many presentations are not effective because they include too much information and contain too many unnecessary distractions.

To be effective keep it simple. AU

- For text use dark colours and an easy-to-read font. For backgrounds use light colours – beige, yellow or light blue
- Label charts/graphs horizontally
- Think about the people on the back row. Use the 8 to 1 rule. The maximum viewing distance for the people at the back to read small sized text is 8 times the height of the full image. If the back row is 40 feet away the text needs to be 5 feet tall
- Forward facing seats are best for information giving meetings. For decision-making meetings set the room so that people can see each other's faces
- Practice in front of a mirror, a friend, a spouse and a colleague
- Rule 1 – Tell then what you are going to tell them. Rule 2 – Tell them. Rule 3 – Tell them what you told them
- Watch your body language – use open-handed gestures, make eye contact, exaggerate your movements if the audience is large

Product details

Product:	!OHP
Price:	£29.95 (inc) on CD-ROM
Supplier:	Spacetech Ltd, 1 The Courtyard, Southwell Business Park, Portland, Dorset DT5 2JS
Tel:	01305 822753
Fax:	01305 860483
E-mail:	sales@spacetech.co.uk
Web:	www.spacetech.co.uk

Product details

Product:	Task Force Clip Art
Price:	£29.95 plus £3 p&p
Supplier:	Akalat Publishing, PO Box 231, Barton, Bedford MK45 4HQ
Tel/fax:	01582 881614
E-mail:	akalat@kbnet.co.uk

3.5" IDE Hard Discs

	Drive	Plus i/face
210 Mb	£39	£81
420 Mb	£49	£87
540 Mb	£59	£107
850 Mb	£65	£112
1.1 Gb	£72	£119
2.1 Gb	£93	£140
2.5 Gb	£97	£144
3.2 Gb	£101	£148
4.2 Gb	£114	£161
5.1 Gb	£119	£166
6.3 Gb	£127	£174
8.2 Gb	£141	£188
10 Gb	£167	£214
12.4 Gb	£193	£240

'Plus i/face' price includes an APDL fast IDE interface.

Part-exchange available if you need a bigger drive. Please phone for prices.

2.5" IDE Hard Discs

	A3020	3010/3000
30 Mb	£36	£79
60 Mb	£49	£92
80 Mb	£56	£99
120 Mb	£63	£106
170 Mb	£72	£119
210 Mb	£79	£122
250 Mb	£84	£127
330 Mb	£94	£137
420 Mb	£99	£145
512 Mb	£120	£170
800 Mb	-	£178
2.1 Gb	-	£197

A3010/3000 includes APDL IDE interface, A3020 includes fitting kit

SCSI Hard Discs

210 Mb		£30
420 Mb	h/h	£55
540 Mb		£68
1 Gb		£79
4.2 Gb	h/h	£159
4.2 Gb		£175
8.7 Gb	h/h	£299

'h/h' indicates half-height approx 1½ inches high, others are 1" high.

IDE CD ROM drives

Drive with all cables and drivers for RO 3.6+ where required

24x	£47
36x	£49

Drive including APDL IDE interface

24x	£94
36x	£96

External

Drive in case with power supply and including an APDL IDE interface. Probably the best way to fit a CD to a pre- RISC-PC machine.

24x	£151
36x	£155

CD ROM driver software

Works with most ATAPI CDs including Goldstar, Hitachi, Lite-on, Mitsumi, Sony, Panasonic, Samsung, Pioneer, Toshiba, Sanyo, NEC, etc. Includes CDFS so can be used with RISC-OS 3.5. Intended for the RPC but can be used with an A5000.

Only £8 or £7 with a drive

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8 Mb	£8
16 Mb	£29
32 Mb	£56
32 Mb High Clearance	£63
64 Mb *from*	£97
128 Mb *from*	£179
2 Mb VRAM	£69
1 Mb to 2 Mb exchange	£47

Datafile PD CDs

PD CD - 3	£7.50
PD CD - 4	£10.50
PD CD - 5	£7.50

Various games

Emotions (RPC only)	£14.95
Flying High (RPC only)	£14.95
Fire and Ice (not S/Arm)	£8.50
Hero Quest (not S/Arm)	£7.50
Quest for Gold	£6.00
Starfighter 3000	£10.00
Revelation (not RPC)	£3.50

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Phone: 0181 778 2659 Fax: 0181 488 0487 www.apdl.co.uk/

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- Uses DMA (Direct Memory Access) on Risc PC. More than twice as fast as the built in IDE interface or others which don't use DMA.
- Includes CDFS and ATAPI CD drivers for many popular CD ROMs.
- Four devices, any combination of CDs and hard drives.
- Up to 8 partitions, so you can have large drives on pre RO 3.6 machines
- Software in flash EEPROM for easy update with VProtect for earlier machines.
- Can use DOS formatted drives or removable discs.
- Supports the new range of Syquest SparQ low cost 1Gb removable drives.
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SparQ internal IDE drive with APDL fast IDE interface just **£199**

NEW - APDL printer port Syquest drive

At last, you can now have a 1Gb Syquest SparQ printer port drive at a realistic price. It isn't as fast as the IDE version but you can fit it to any machine with a bi-directional printer port (ie. anything with a hi-density floppy drive) and move it between machines. With Acorn and DOS driver software. just **£199**

ACE 586 PC cards

Available with 128K cache from just £199 or 512K cache from £299. We can offer a trade in against your old card, which makes it even cheaper. Good performance for Windows at a sensible APDL price.

General software

Faster PC - £20 The alternative XT PC emulator. Works on any model with 2Mb RAM from an A3000 to a Strong ARM RPC.

PowerBase - £15 Popular extremely powerful but very easy to use database. With examples, tutorials and printed manuals. Better than most products costing many times the price. Does everything that 99% of database users will ever need.

MenuBar - £15 The very best pull-down menu system. An absolute essential for any hard disc user. You can switch between up to 30 different menu bars. Incredibly easy to set up, add items to menus, move them, etc.

Tiger - £15 Lets you use very long descriptive filenames. Unlike some products this is very robust as it works in parallel with the filer so can't corrupt discs.

WorkTop - £15 Switch between up to 30 different environments with a single mouse click. Stars the tasks you require, opens directories, loads files, changes screen mode. Just like moving to another computer. An essential productivity tool.

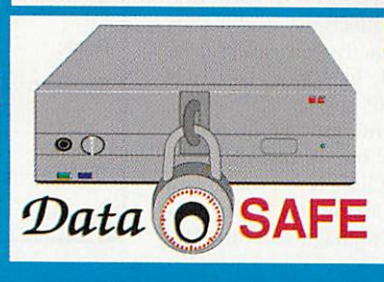
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Mark Moxon
continues his series on RISC OS Java programming with a look at parameters, menus and dialogue boxes

Life, the universe and Java

PART 5

Welcome back to our Java tutorial, where things are really beginning to cook. Before leaping into the subject of adding menus to our windows, let's take a look at how to interact further with HTML.

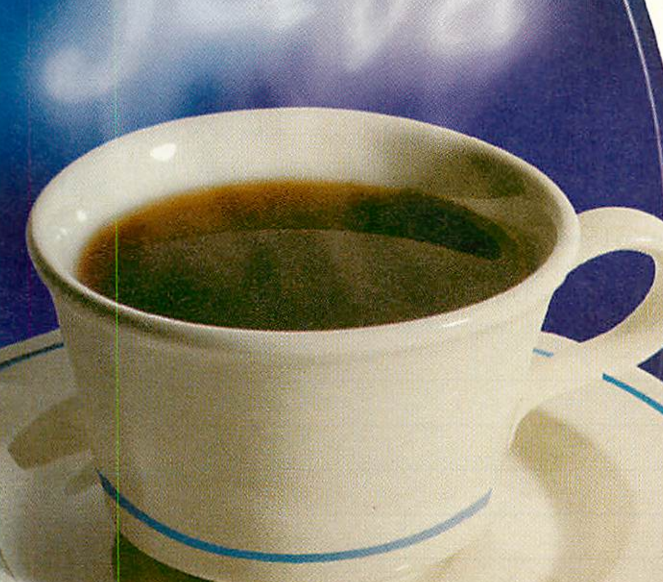
Passing parameters

One of the most effective ways of interacting easily between our Java programs and HTML is to pass parameters from HTML to our applets. This means we can use the same code to perform different actions, depending on the HTML that calls that code.

Parameter passing is very simple. First we must decide on the names of the parameters we will be passing, and then use Java's **getParameter()** method to read the value of the parameter that's been passed from HTML. The argument to **getParameter()** is simply the name of the parameter, which must be exactly the same as the definition in the HTML file.

Take a look at the Java program *Ex15/java* on the cover disc: this applet looks up the values of four parameters passed from HTML under the names **option1**, **option2**, **option3** and **option4**, and these are instantly added to a choice list. When one of these options is chosen, the relevant value of parameters **response1**, **response2**, **response3** or **response4** is displayed.

The HTML code to pass parameters to these values is very simple, and two examples are shown in the HTML file *index/html*. To save you searching through a long HTML file for the code, here is the first example of HTML parameter passing:




```
<P><APPLET
CODE="Ex15.class" WIDTH=500
HEIGHT=70>

<PARAM NAME=option1
VALUE="The Beatles">

<PARAM NAME=response1
VALUE="Revolver, Sgt
Pepper, White Album">

<PARAM NAME=option2
VALUE="Nirvana">

<PARAM NAME=response2
VALUE="Bleach, Nevermind, In
Utero">

<PARAM NAME=option3 VALUE="REM">

<PARAM NAME=response3
VALUE="Document, Green, Monster">

<PARAM NAME=option4 VALUE="Billy
Bragg">

<PARAM NAME=response4
VALUE="Worker's Playtime, William
Blake">

<P>[Unfortunately you cannot run
Java if you would like to see the
output of this applet, please use a
browser which is Java-aware.]

</APPLET>
```

The **PARAM** tag is used to define a parameter's value, with the parameter's name given in the **NAME** attribute and the value in the **VALUE** attribute. Note that the **PARAM** tag is separate from the **APPLET** tag, it isn't part of **APPLET**.

Parameter passing can save you a lot of time. In our example – check out the 'Parameter passing' section of *index/html* in your browser – we have two choice lists with totally different entries and responses, and there's nothing to stop you passing more useful information like URLs or personalised information to your Java applet to make its display even more tailored to its context.

Creating menus

One of the major reasons for defining windows rather than just using the applet's space in our browser is so we can use menus. As an Acorn user you might





think that this is a strange restriction – after all, surely you could simply click Menu over the applet's workspace to get up a menu? – but remember that other machines don't have the luxury of context-sensitive buttons. Instead they use menu-bars along the top of a window, and Java is no exception.

Well, that's the theory: when Java programmers talk about menu systems they talk about menu-bars, which consist of collections of menus, each of which is made up of menu items. But in RISC OS the menu-bar is actually displayed as a menu that pops up when you click Menu over over an applet's window, so we don't have to worry about being stuck with menu-bars, thank goodness.

Still, the terminology sticks: we still have to talk about menu-bars and menus when we mean the main menu and its submenus, but Java's menu system is so easy to set up it's a small concern. Let's take a look at how to set up a menu system over the window we defined last month: the new code is shown in *Ex16/java*.

For our menu window we define a class **MWindow** which is based on the code for last month's **Window** class. We could always have defined **MWindow** as a class that extended **Window**, but it's instructive to have all the code in one place, so we have to define a class with a different name to before, to avoid over-writing the *Windows/class* file from last time.

MWindow starts off in the same way as **Window**, with the creation of two panels of buttons on a grid, but then we get right into the menu code. All our menu objects are declared as fields before the constructor definition using a number of special menu classes, depending on how the objects fit into our menu structure.

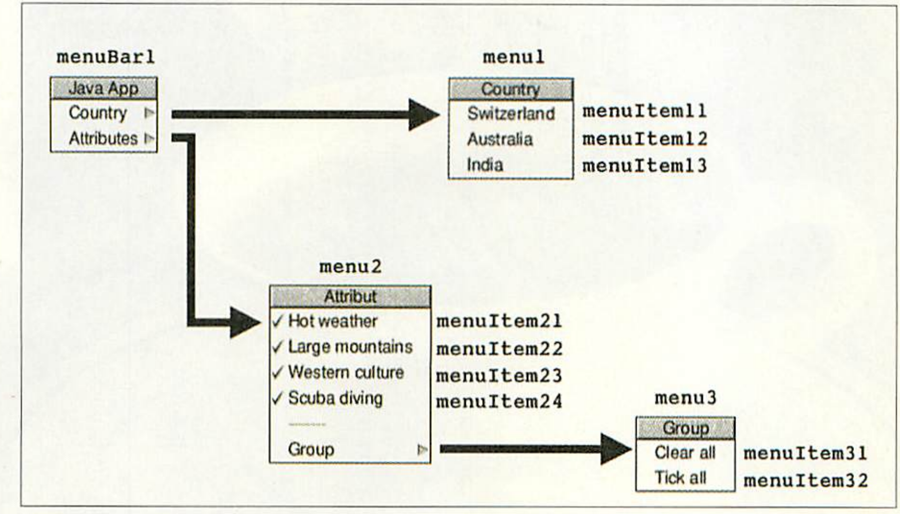


Figure I: The layout for the menu system in Ex16/java

Take a look at Figure I, which describes the menu structure we want. We want one menu-bar in the window, so we define an object **menuBar1** of the class **MenuBar**; this will, of course, appear as our first menu, despite it being a 'menu-bar'. Each entry in this menu has to be a menu, in this case **menu1** and **menu2** which are objects of the class **Menu**.

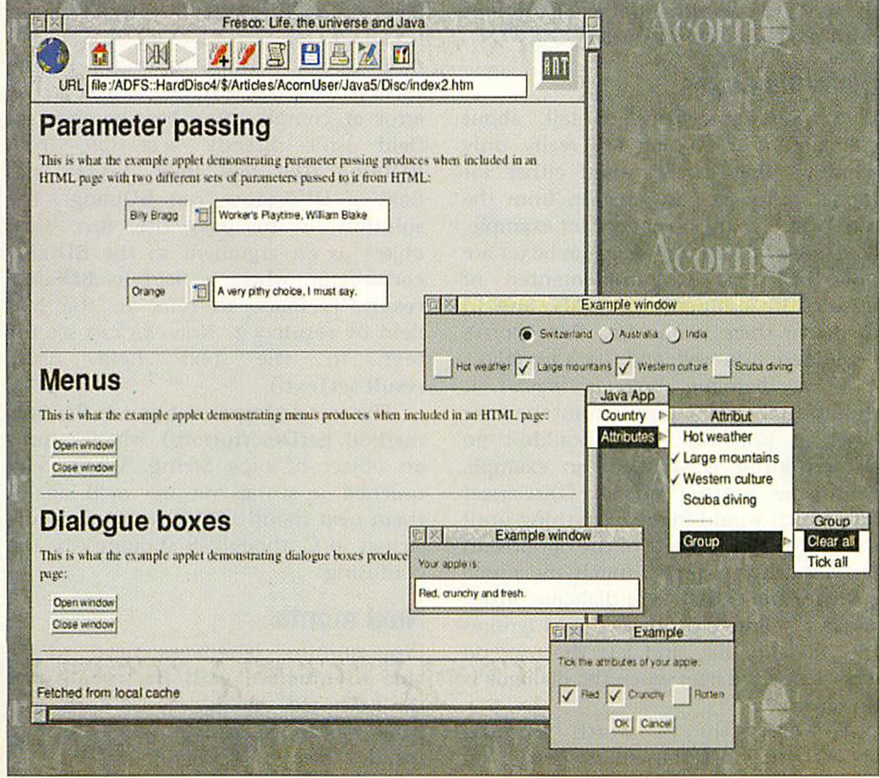
Menu1 contains three normal items, which are objects of the MenuItem class. They are called **menuItem11**, **menuItem12** and **menuItem13** to denote that they are the first, second and third items in **menu1**. Similarly **menu2** contains **menuItem21**, **menuItem22**, **menuItem23** and **menuItem24**, but this time we want them to be tickable items, so they are defined as objects of the class **CheckboxMenuItem**. Finally **menu3** contains two normal items, **menuItem31** and **menuItem32**. Put all these together and you end up with the declaration statements in *Ex16/java*.

Defining each of the menu components is, as per usual, done using constructor methods. Each normal menu item, like **menuItem11**, is defined using **new MenuItem()**, where the argument is the text of the menu item. The four tickable items are defined using **new CheckboxMenuItem()**, with the argument again giving the text of the item.

The menus themselves are defined using **new Menu()**, where the argument is the title of the menu (and therefore the text that will appear in any menus of which this is a submenu). We can then add items to this menu using the normal **add()** method, so for example **menu3.add(menuItem32)** means add the menu item **menuItem32** (defined as 'Tick all') to the **menu3**. We can insert a separator line in a menu using the **addSeparator()** method (which takes no argument); you can see the effect of this in **menu2**.

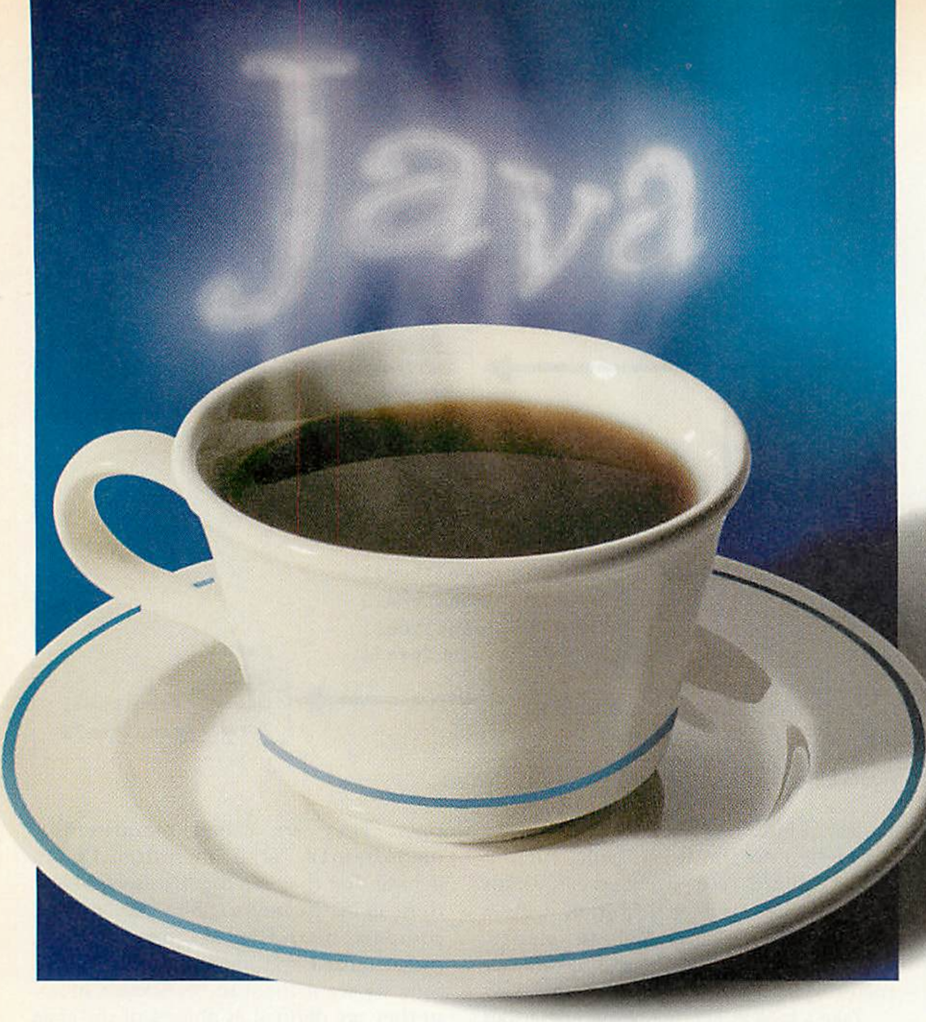
Submenus can be constructed by simply adding a menu to another menu as if it was a menu item, just by using the **add()** method. We do this in the line **menu2.add(menu3)** which adds **menu3** onto the end of **menu2**, thus creating a submenu.

The menu-bar **menuBar1** is then defined using **new MenuBar()** with no argument (menu-bars can't have titles, so Acorn's JVM titles it 'Java App'). The two menus that appear in the bar, **menu1**



Parameter passing, menus and dialogue boxes as shown by Fresco and Acorn's JVM





and **menu2**, are added using – you guessed it – the **add()** method.

The final part of our menu creation is to attach our menu-bar to our window using the Frame class's **setMenuBar()** method, which takes the menu-bar as its argument. Now the menus will be displayed and dealt with automatically by our JVM although you might notice that Acorn's version truncates some menu titles, such as 'Attributes' to 'Attribut' in our example (another little bug, unfortunately).

Reacting to menu choices

When a menu item is chosen by the user, it produces an event that can be caught with our normal **action()** method, and all we need to do is to check the value of **e.target** to see which menu item was chosen. Our JVM will automatically take care of ticking or clearing tickable items, and even keeps menus open or us if the user chooses an item with Adjust.

However, if we want to read the value of our tickable items, or change the appearance of the menu depending on choices made elsewhere by the user, we have to use a couple of methods that you might have spotted from our previous examples for panels. The two methods **getState()** and**setState()** can be used to manipulate radio buttons, check boxes *and* tickable menu items, the first one returning the current state of the object, and the second one setting the state of the object according to its boolean argument.

In *Ex16/java* we make extensive use of both methods to ensure that (a) when the user changes the state of any of the window's check boxes we also change the state of the tickable menu items, and (b) vice-versa, so choosing one of the tickable menu items sets the state of the check boxes in the window. I could have done the same for the countries in the menu, but to demonstrate normal menu items I've left them as untickable: choosing one of them, however, needs to alter the state of the window's icons, so we use **setState()** to do this, as we also do when the user chooses either of the 'all' options from the Group submenu.

Dialogue boxes

We've just got space to talk about dialogue boxes, which are really only windows that can be used either for input, or to get confirmation from the user before taking an action, for example. One word of warning: dialogue boxes are not the most well-implemented of features in a number of JVMs, and in particular there is one area that Acorn's JVM doesn't do well, and that's *modality.*

If a dialogue box is *modal* it should grab every input from the user when it pops up, and shouldn't go away until it is satisfied: an example would be putting up an OK/Cancel box which would freeze everything until the user clicked on one of the options. In fact modality is pretty much the *raison d'être* for the existence of dialogue boxes, so it's a shame that Acorn's JVM ignores the modality flag and lets the user do what he or she likes when the dialogue is on screen.

However, they're worth learning about, as they're still useful for putting up windows that want a response. Dialogue boxes, like windows, should be defined by classes that extend the default class: windows should extend the **Frame** class, and dialogue boxes should extend the **Dialog** class.

Notice the spelling: as Java is American, dialogue boxes are don't have the 'ue' at the end in code (in the same way that you 'center' components in a window and change the 'color' in HTML). We can define a constructor for dialogue boxes by calling the **super()** method, as for windows, but this time with three arguments, namely the frame to which the dialogue box is attached, the dialogue's title, and a boolean flag to determine whether the box is modal (though, as discussed, I wouldn't rely on the modality of the window making any difference).

Our example program, *Ex17/java*, puts up a dialogue box to get some facts from the user about an apple, and then posts a result to the text field in the main window. Although the program should be fairly easy to follow, it's worth pointing out a few things. The first is that, to get around the modality shortcoming, we need to be a little clever when the OK button is clicked.

We want to be able to send text to the text field when the OK button is clicked, and the initial reaction would be to make the text the returned result of a function, so the **DWindow** class can put the text in the field; however the OK button click is processed in the **action()** method which we can't play around with for fear of screwing up Java's event handling system, so instead we could try to put the text directly into the text field.

However, if we simply try to use **setText()** on the text field, we'll get an error at compile time because the text field isn't directly accessible from **BDialog** (the text field, **text1**, is a field of **DWindow**, not **BDialog**). The solution is to pass the text field object as an argument to the **BDialog** constructor, where a field in **BDialog**, **result**, is made to refer to the text field by **result = t**. Now we can set the text in the text field using **result.setText()**.

The second important part is the final method, **getDescription()**, which returns an object of type **String**. We haven't touched on strings yet, but we'll look at them next month; if you've come across strings in C, though, it shouldn't be too confusing.

Next month

Programming languages need to be able to interface with the mouse and the keyboard, and Java is no exception. Next month we unleash the power of input, among other thrilling subjects. Don't miss out! AU

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Applied survival

Brian O'Carroll continues his trip through the urban data jungle using a shield of !Impact-3 to ward off inaccessible data, while Alex takes tea at the 'White' house.

Last issue's article proposed that people don't appear to think like computers, a theory that still holds true a month later. With an understanding of linked databases under our belt this month we're going to look at using Action scripts to present the data in those databases.

The overall look of *!Impact-3* blends with the RISC OS desktop. Sometimes, however, we would like to present the data in a specific way and another application can be used to do this.

CSV

Before considering Action scripts I need to mention a fundamentally important data export method, the CSV file (Comma Separated Value file). This is the lowest common denominator of data handling. In *!Impact-3* use the 'Import' and 'Export' icons (green arrows pointing to and away from white cards) to deal with CSV files.

Each line of a CSV file is one 'record', each 'field' is separated by a comma, and text data is usually enclosed in double quotes. Other databases and spreadsheets can normally understand CSV format files, the user can read them directly using a text editor, and they can be used by applications on non-Acorn computers.

!Impact-3 imports CSV files using a Field Map to put each datum from the file in the right database field. Even if data is not in CSV format it can sometimes be altered to work.

Every week I receive an e-mail listing hits on web pages. Edit's search and replace facility quickly converts this into CSV format, which is imported into my *!Impact-3* database of web statistics for storage and analysis.

Data output to screen

On screen data display is via an *!Impact-3* Card, or its Table Display. Each line of the Table Display is a record and each column a field as defined by a Field Map. Clicking on a table row shows the record in the Card. Using the Table Display can make retrieving the required record easier than using a search for some kinds of database. For this reason, the most useful Action script you'll ever need is the one that displays the Table listing all records in the database. The script for it is typically...

```
Index "BySurname";
Filter;
Fields "QuickView";
Table "All records in "+DataName();
```

- **BySurname** and **QuickView** are the names of an Index and a Field Map already defined.
- **Filter**, used without any name after it, turns off any active filter ensuring that all the records are included in the Table Display.
- **DataName()** supplies the name of the database in which the Action script resides.

The **QuickView** Field Map will typically contain name and telephone number only, the rest of the record can be seen by clicking on the table entry required.

An alternative to the Filter is the TempFilter command. This does not require the Filter to be defined as the Index and Field maps must be. Instead the condition for including each record in the Table Display is given in the Action script. For example, inserting...

```
TempFilter "Len(name) > 0";
```

...instead of the **Filter** command will cause the table to display only records which do not have a blank name field – where its length is more than zero.

The Table Display can really come into its own when used to list records in one database that are linked to a single record in another.

For a ready-made example of this look at the sample databases that come with *!Impact-3*, in the 'Addresses' database. On the 'Main' card there is an Action button labelled "More...", select-clicking on which opens a window of Action buttons. Select-clicking on "List Videos" displays a Table listing the records in 'Videos' which are linked to the current record in the 'Address' database – this is a list of the videos currently hired out by that person. The script looks like this...

```
Filter Videos:"HiredTo";
Index  Videos:"DateHired";
Fields Videos:"HireList";
Table  Videos:"Videos hired to " +
Name;
```

Compare this to my first listing and you will see the use of **Videos:** in instructions enables this Action script to control a database other than the one in which it resides. Many Action commands can be prefixed in this way.

The definition in 'Videos' for the filter **HiredTo** is...

```
name == Address:Name
```

...which could have been written directly



Addresses
Name: William Smith
Address: 218 Crescent Drive Petswood Kent
Post code: PE3 5YH
Tel: 1478 850353
Fax:
Email:
Empty fields Fax and Email
CSV file
"William Smith","218 Crescent Drive\nPetswood\nKent","PE3 5YH","1478 850353","",""
"Davy Jones","5, Full Fathom Way\nThe Atlantic","AL9 7BG","","",""
"Major Paigne","11, Regimental Row\nWarfield Rise\nUpper Fort Hill","UF7 9AZ","","",""
"R. Higgins","Flat 2, Tall Blocks\nRotten Road\nNewtown","N16 9TY","","",""
"Fred Smith","77, Summer Lane\nWest Place\nSouthampton","S34 7AA","","",""
"Sam Weller","7, Marsh Lane Drive\nSoggy Bottom\nWigan","WG9 2XY","","",""
"Charles Vicar","99, East End Road\nPebble End\nStockport","AL4 5MJ","","",""

The first record appears on the top line of an exported CSV file.

in the Action script above as...

```
TempFilter Videos:"name ==
Address:Name";
```

Selecting a record in this table displays them in the Video's database card, if it is visible.

There are many other Action buttons in the example databases and all you have to do to look at their scripts is to adjust-click on their Action button. The scripts are full of comments to help you understand how they work and no-one is going to mind if you fiddle around with, break, mend, or improve them.

Don't forget to put comments in your own scripts. Months later you'll want to change them but will not have a clue why some of them are written the way they are unless you've left a note for yourself.

Printing

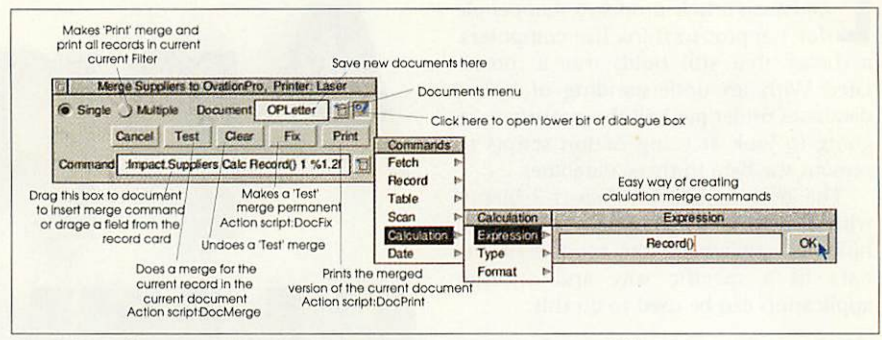
Getting data out of a database is often done with the intention of printing it – on paper, to a file, or perhaps to *!ArcFax*. It also means using desktop publishing (DTP) software, as a method of setting out how the data is presented. For *!Impact-3* this is done via *!OvationPro* or *!Impression*, both of which are explicitly supported.

Using DTP software to present data started with the 'Mail Merge', a process that went something like this:

- Create a letter with marked spaces left for the name and address of the recipient, perhaps as a DTP document
- Create a list of names and addresses, perhaps as a CSV file
- Put these two lists through the 'Mail Merge' software
- Out of the printer would pop a pile of the given letters names and addresses inserted in the marked spaces as per the second list.

This process was (and still can be) handled by the DTP software itself.

The 'Merge' idea, now also referred to as 'Data Merge' or 'Report Merge', covers many situations where data from one source is inserted into a document. The process can be controlled by *!Impact-3*, which is very convenient, especially for often repeated reports, and can be used to make all sorts of documents, not just letters as was required originally.



The dialogue box accessed via the *!Impression* or *!OvationPro* icons which enables documents to be stored within the database for convenience and merge tags to be easily inserted into the selected document.

Talking to DTP software

To merge using *!Impact-3* a DTP document needs to be prepared – 'Merge Tags' need to be embedded in it. To do this, save the document to the Merge window in *!Impact-3* as described in the manual. This saves the document inside the database where it can easily be referred to from within an Action script.

At this point *!Impression* will give you warning saying words to the effect that 'The document is already open'. That's fine, continue using the said already open document.

!OvationPro, on the other hand, will present you with a second document of the same name as the one you've just saved. That's fine too, use that one and close the original one.

Database Fields or Merge Commands can be dragged from the database or the merge window straight onto the DTP document to create Merge Tags. This will only work if you have the lower part of the Merge window open using the pen and ink 'edit' icon, and only when dragging fields from the card where the Merge window was opened.

The Merge Tags should appear as either "<fieldname>" in *!Impression* or "[Merge 1]" in *!OvationPro*. If it doesn't work in *!OvationPro* and you see something like... {merge ":Impact.Test Fetch fieldx"}

...then the problem is to do with the *!TransDDF* loader – this needs to be run before *!OvationPro* is run.

Other errors may indicate the absence of the 'Impulse' applet which implements the communication module Computer Concepts wrote to do all this sort of stuff.

Once you've got a merge tag in the DTP document clicking 'Test' will substitute it for the current record's data for that field. Clicking 'Clear' will revert to the merge tagged format. Change the database record and that data is merged instead. All that's quite exciting on its own if you've never seen it before. Styles and text effects can be applied to the tags so that when the merge is performed the data is in the same style and effect as the tag was. Text and graphics can be inserted around the merge tags to put the data in context, and the whole thing formatted using tab stops and alignment.

The bottom menu in the merge window leads to other clever stuff: merge commands need not just be fields, they could be calculations, dates, numbers, or text. Whole tables can be merged using the Table menu entry. These perform in the same manner as *!Impact-3*'s Table Display with the pre-defined Filter, Index and Field Map names included as part of the Merge Command.

This produces a single merge tag that expands into a whole table. Each record is preceded by a new line and each field is separated by a tab character. A little experimentation is required to get the tab stops in the right place.

Once you've got a nice set of merge tags save the document (to it's existing path inside the database) and close it. Now set up an Action script as follows, altering 'Test' to the name of your file, and '*!OvationPro*' to '*!Impression*' if necessary...

```
MergeTo "OvationPro";

DocLoad "Test";

DocMerge "Test";
```

Running this script (select-clicking on it's Action button) should load the document 'Test' (or whatever you called it) and merge the current record's data, then it'll sit on your screen waiting. You can't edit the document but you should be able to

Workflow

I introduced Workflow last month as an idea to focus on to get !Impact-3 doing things for you. Several things Alex does contribute to Workflow...

- **Parts Cost: The Notes field is updated to record parts as they are used for a job so that a part does not get forgotten. This is is then used to make the invoice – it does two jobs in one.**
- **Invoiced flag: This crucial indicator will ensure that each customer gets at least one invoice.**
- **Date work completed: This enables the 'Jobs' database to be listed according to completion. Listing all work that is dated to start before today and has no completion date will list work in progress. This also indicates the date on which payment is due allowing 'Invoice 60 days Overdue' type notices to be sent out dated with authority.**
- **Amount paid: Rather than being a flag, this is a value. In this way a part payment could be made by a customer can be recorded. The invoice document can be made to subtract this value from the total and write "Paid in full, Thank you" if it equals the total bill.**

print it from the DTP document window, or you could add the command...

```
DocPrint "Test";
```

to the script and that would do it for you.

!OvationPro users can also add the command

```
Macro "{filescrap(currentfile())}",
"Test";
```

which will close the document again after printing.

For perfectionists, save your merge tagged document scaled at 50% with all the button bars and info menus turned off and that's exactly how it will appear on your screen while it's printing – no-one need even know it's an *!OvationPro* document, it looks like part of the database, which looks like part of RISC OS.

This kind of script is perfect for printing envelopes which don't have any 'content' other than the name and address. For writing letters you don't want the document to print until you've put the words in, then you'll want to save the completed letter somewhere. To do this use the command...

```
DocFix "Test";
```

...instead of commands for printing and closing the document. This will allow the document, with it's data inserted, to be edited. You can't go back to the merge tagged version once a document is fixed with the above command so don't save it over the merge tagged document in the database – put it in a 'Letters' folder somewhere sensible.

In fact, with a little skill *!Impact-3* can even store the 'Fixed' letter somewhere sensible for you, but that's one of next month's ideas. Meanwhile, Alex is ready to progress from mild-mannered plumber to mild-mannered Script-Enabled plumber.

Plumbing accounts

It has been a month since Alex decided that his simple 'Clients' and 'Jobs' databases ought to be able to do most of the invoicing donkey work, and Alex's solution is working well.

A 'List All' Action button gives him a quick look-up by surname of his clients so that he can find one easily without typing. Having selected a record a 'List Jobs' button gives him a concise chronological run-down of the work for that client, completed or scheduled. This Action script reads...

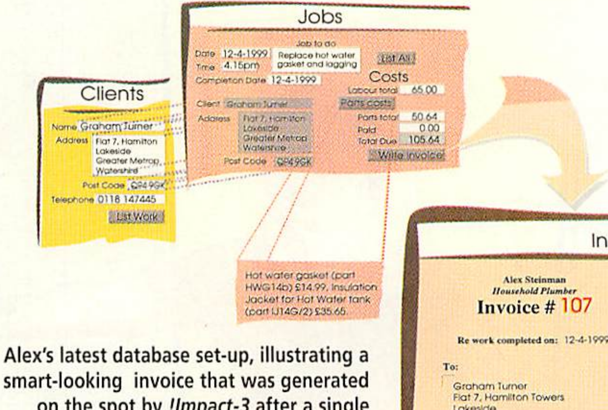
```
Index Jobs:"ByDate";

TempFilter Jobs:"Record(\"who\") ==
Record(\"Clients\")";

Fields Jobs:"Concise";

Table Jobs:"A concise list of work
by date for " + Clients:name;
```

The forward slashes distinguish a quote that is part of the data for a command from the quotes that enclose the whole filter command instruction.



Alex's latest database set-up, illustrating a smart-looking invoice that was generated on the spot by *!Impact-3* after a single mouse click on the 'Write Invoice' Action button. The invoice has been formatted using a variety of tab-stops and frames.

It was very confusing last week when fixing a leaky hot water gasket for a Graham Turner – the work done for another, unrelated, Graham Turner was also indiscriminately included in the the first Graham Turner's Table Display.

Alex altered the script so that, rather than comparing the contents of the linked fields, the above script now compares the records to which the links are made by record number. The name on the two records may look the same but *!Impact-3* knows the difference.

After three mouse clicks and a whirl of screen activity Alex takes a moment for a friendly smile at his customer, Miss Polly White, across a strong cup of tea served in her best china.

Alex has made a number of other improvements to the 'Jobs' database. He has added fields for the labour cost, which he prides himself on usually knowing in advance, and a field for the total cost of parts, to be filled in once the work is done.

To go with the parts cost is a Notes field which holds a text description of the parts supplied to do the work and how much they each cost. He fills this in as he is doing the work so that he doesn't forget an item. A 'calc' field works out the total cost by adding the labour cost and parts cost fields together.

There is also a 'Completion Date' field and an 'Invoiced' flag, in the former of which Alex has just entered today's date on Miss Polly's record. Finally, Alex has added a field to write in the 'Amount Paid'.

Now, with the single click of his 'Write Invoice' button, the 'Invoiced' field is ticked, Alex's previously blank invoice springs up already filled in with several items...

- Name and Address, carefully positioned so that they will clearly show through the window of a DL envelope
- Invoice number, which, for simplicity, is the record number of the work in the 'Jobs' database – the merge calculation "Record()" was used.
- Today's date and the date the work was started and completed, with a fully Y2K compliant four-digit year.
- The labour charge, the text describing the parts supplied, the total parts cost, and, finally, after the pound sign, formatted in a big, clear, bold font, the amount the customer needs to pen on the cheque.

Alex prints the invoice on his battery-powered ink-jet, and saves the document as **Work.Invoices.WhiteP.1999-04-17**.

Although the whole process is very quick and Miss Polly White doesn't get a chance to look closely at Alex's 'Peanut', she is still very impressed with his efficient manner and business-like invoice presentation.

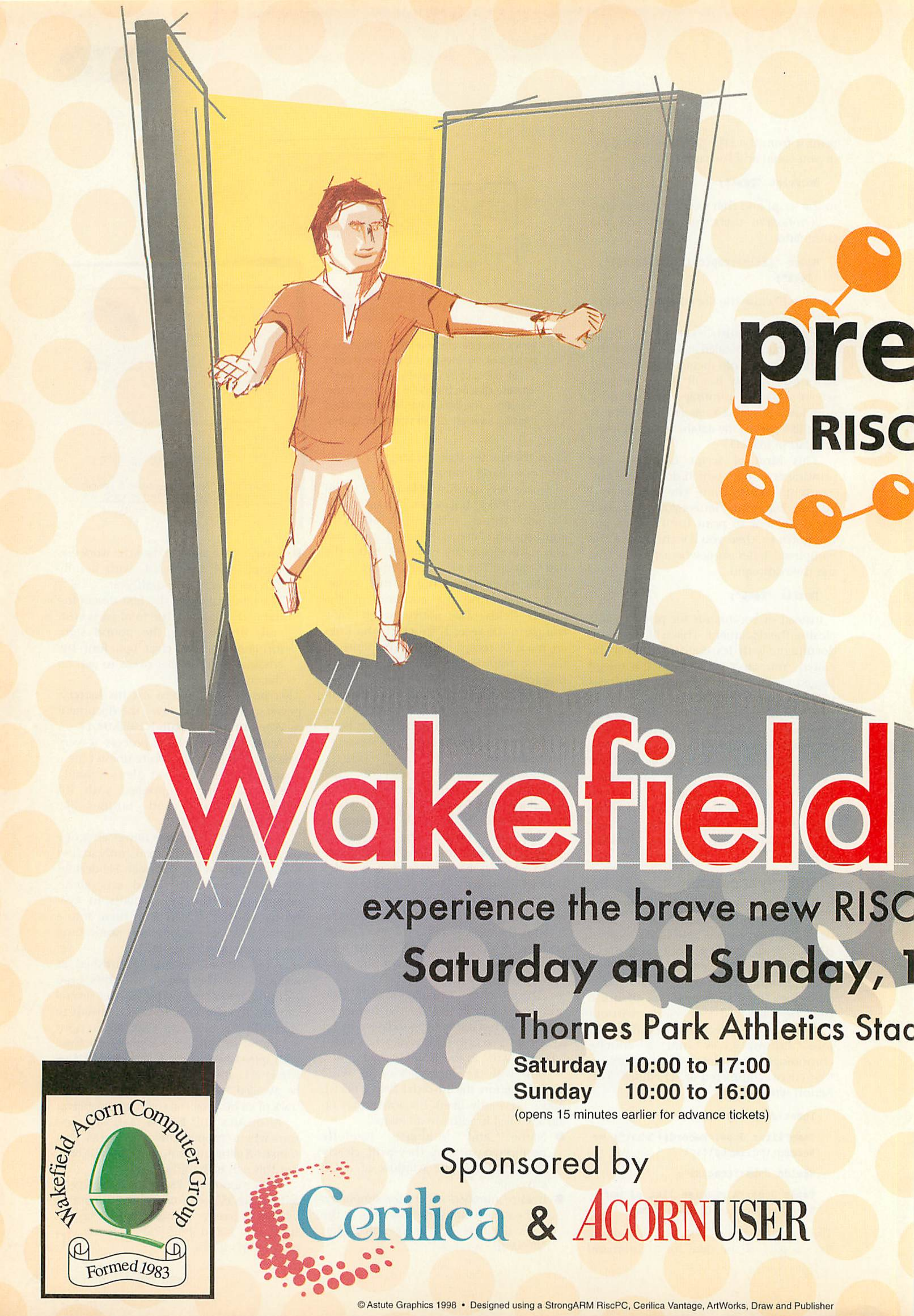
An elated Alex returns home, after one more cup of tea 'for the road', only to find a Tax Return on the doormat. He decides to get it over with and sets about exporting all the Jobs records in CSV format so that he can drop them into a spreadsheet to make up something resembling an account ledger.

A tedious time later he has finished his accounts for the one month he's been working, and realises why you get several months to return the form – he needs to start filling in next year's Tax Return now!

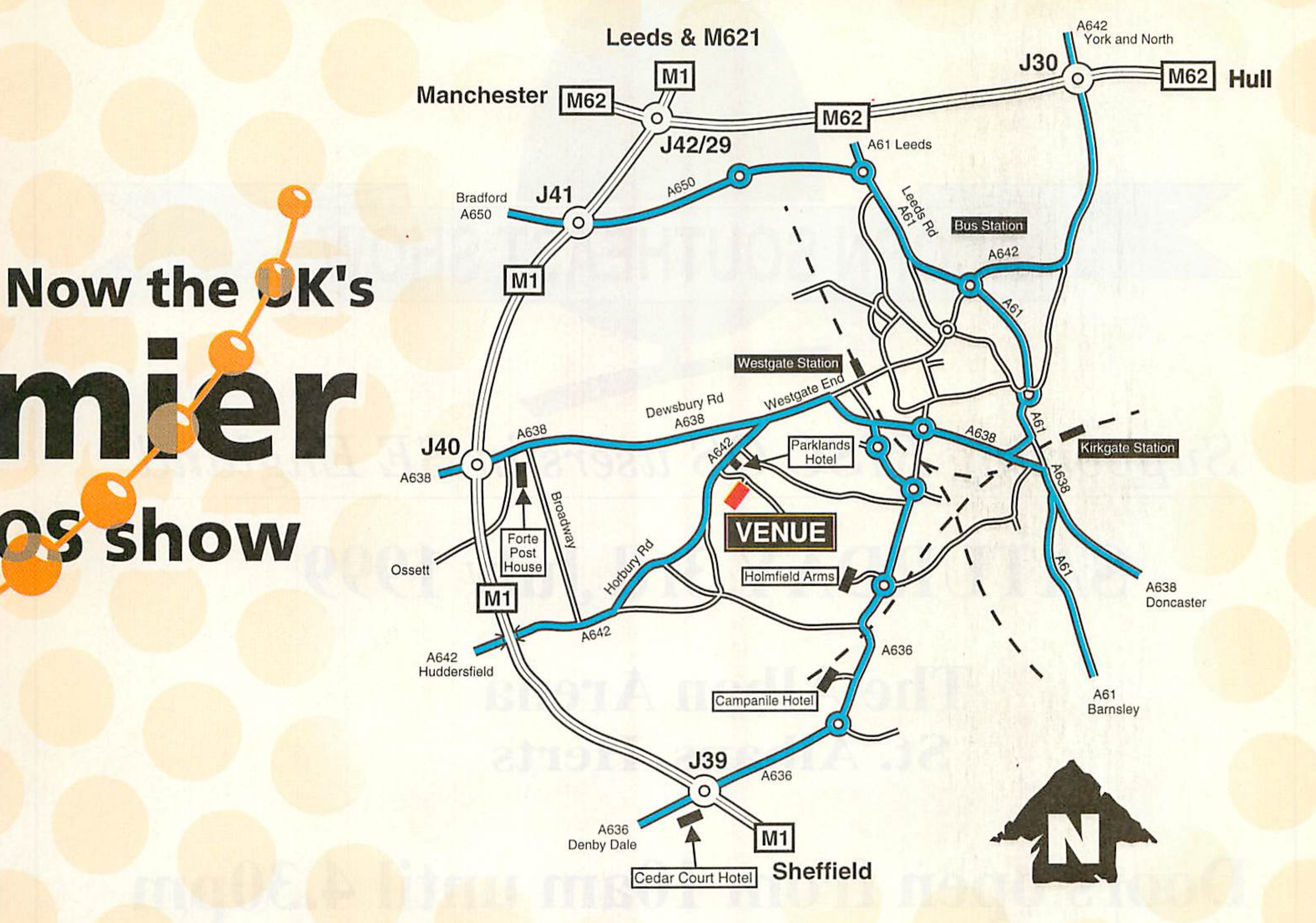
And so he can. All that messing around with spreadsheets, for a sole trader like Alex whose accounts are relatively simple, could be avoided by allowing *!Impact-3* to keep track of all his financial comings and goings.

Also, Alex still has to manually find somewhere to put the documents that *!Impact-3* generates automatically for him, but this can be handled too.

Next month we'll see how Alex gets on as he extracts performance from *!Impact-3* which, as Jeremy Clarkson might say, "is so hot it could boil Polly's kettle before she's lit the gas". AU


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To PC or not PC?

Chris Drage looks at the question facing many schools

With Acorn's devastating news last September, even the most dedicated Acorn-equipped primary school could be excused for holding its collective hands up in horror and having thoughts about moving towards the ubiquitous PC. Things usually have a habit of looking more optimistic once the dust settles and this case is no exception.

Before readers even begin considering plans to change platform, they should step back and take a long hard look at what such a move may mean to their school and also whether the Acorn family of products meets their needs now and whether it will continue to for the foreseeable future. It is this latter imponderable that I want to address in these articles, and to help I approached a number of the major players in the educational software/hardware market.

One of the most popular and respected software publishers for primary software is Sherston Software. MD Bill Bonham commented: "Sherston will continue creating and publishing Acorn RISC OS based software for the foreseeable future. All of its current 'up and coming' products are CD-based and most of them will be supplied on triple format discs (Acorn, Windows and Apple Mac); these CDs work identically on all platforms and will support any modern Acorn machine with a CD-ROM drive (A7000, A7000+, Risc PC, etc)".

Topologika too, are optimistic and will continue to develop Acorn products but with a cautionary note which every IT coordinator should take heed of: "Topologika will only support machines for which people will buy software – even if we still think Acorns are the best for schools and business (we run ours on Acorns). Future sales of existing products will form the basis of judgements about which platforms to support for planned new products. As far as 1999 is concerned, we have in total 17 new Acorn programs due for release. Sixteen of these form the 'DO I.T.' series for primary schools (check it out on www.topolgka.demon.co.uk), while one is a complete rewrite for Acorn of our best-selling turtle graphics program *!ScreenTurtle*. This product now knocks the spots off all of its competitors – including our own PC version!

Kudlian Soft is another company with a string of excellent software titles to its name. It will still be selling and supporting its Acorn software and has taken the decision not to increase the price of its Acorn titles for 1999, nor to change their licensing structure. However, Kudlian's Windows titles will have a different licensing structure that will effectively make them much more expensive – generally something that schools changing to Windows PC will learn to their cost!

However, Gary Atkinson, Kudlian's MD, is very optimistic about one development: "We have been playing with an NC here, getting it to boot TopCat from an NT server. TopCat is probably the most exciting 'Acorn' product to emerge recently. Basically, it soft loads a full version of RISC OS and works just like a desktop machine but with less management issues, and you can run Windows NT as a 'thin client' over the network. Given that an NC is so cheap as well, this is like having your cake and eating it. We are going to develop an NC/NT version of Launcher as a front end."

RESOURCE has been producing educational software for 15 years and in that time has developed software for most of the different types of computers used



in schools. Brian Stevenson, RESOURCE's MD, is keen to emphasise that his company will continue to develop for the Acorn platform as long as there is sufficient demand to cover development costs. He told me: "We launched three new programs at BETT '99 for Acorn and will continue to offer support to all our customers."

AVP too, has always supported Acorn right from the BBC B days and has produced more than five hundred programs over the years. The company now has more than 20 Acorn CD-ROMs in their award-winning PictureBase series and they don't intend to stop there!

The award-winning *!TextEase* is rapidly becoming the definitive doc-ument processor/multimedia authoring tool for schools. Will there be further development of this exceptional software on the Acorn platform?

Geoff Titmuss of Softease Limited comments: "Softease is committed to supporting the three main educational platforms, Acorn, Mac and Windows. With *!TextEase* all three platforms can be used along side each other, so there is no reason for schools to stop using Acorn kit, or for us to stop developing Acorn *!TextEase*. Acorn is my personal favourite, and much of our development work is carried out initially on Acorn kit. While my StrongARM Risc PC is working, and not outdated, I will continue to use it in preference to other platforms. Softease still sees a healthy market for our Acorn product, and will continue to support it well into the future".

Acorn computers have a long standing reputation for being ideal for DTP applications, so how does Mike Williams of Akalat Publishing feel about Acorn's decision to terminate its desktop machines? He says: "Akalat remains committed to the Acorn platform; *Acorn Publisher* will continue as before, and with the prospect of RISC OS 4 there is much to look forward to. Despite events at Acorn itself, RISC OS and associated third party software provides one of the best, easy-to-use, cost effective environments I know for all DTP and image processing work".

Jim Daniels runs Pineapple Software which produces *!Killer*, the definitive virus killer for Acorn computers. Pineapple certainly intends to carry on supplying and supporting Acorn for the foreseeable future. Jim is quick to point out, "Acorns still represent the best value for money in schools because of their reliability and low running costs. PCs may be cheap to buy but have very high maintenance costs and poor reliability especially in a school environment".

Neil Souch of 4Mation Educational Resources probably sums up the feelings of most long standing Acorn software publishers, "Understandably, Acorn users have been questioning the future of Acorn computers in schools for two years or so now. Our answer is always the same: If you look at 4Mation's latest catalogue, and web site, you will see that 4Mation continue to support all their Acorn products right back to days of the BBC micro! There are no immediate plans to change this policy".

On the software side then, everything looks pretty secure as far as schools are concerned but with the proviso that software publishers will only continue to support their Acorn software titles only as long as there are schools out there prepared to purchase it. All the essential software tools are there to deliver the National Curriculum's ICT orders, but where I think there is concern is in the development of software which needs to be compliant with international communication standards like Java, Javascript, and so on.

However, Argonet is making sure that too is being addressed: Ian Goodall, "ArgoNet is committed to the Acorn market. ArgoNet has just announced the release of Javascript (in conjunction with ANT Ltd) for *!Voyager* and the ANT *Internet Suite*, we have also created (in conjunction with Icon Technology) a reader for RISC OS users to read and print Microsoft *Word* (*6,7* & *Office 97/98*) documents. The development of these products demonstrates our determination to keep existing and future Acorn users at the forefront of educational and Internet usage. But don't forget ArgoSphere, whilst not specific to RISC OS, it was specially versioned at launch for RISC OS by ourselves to allow for the lack of Javascript".

So in terms of software at least, the future looks very rosy for Acorn users. Providing they keep buying software products, Acorn versions of new software will be forthcoming. There is a distinct lesson here for those tempted to copy or 'share' software....DON'T. There will be no quicker way to ensure the death of Acorn software support forever than by pirating products.

Next month

Next month I turn to the hardware scene. No matter how good the software, we still need Acorn computers to run it on. With Acorn, or 'Element 14' as it is now called (i.e. silicon), no longer building computers, will the future look equally rosy for the hardware scene? Watch this space. AU

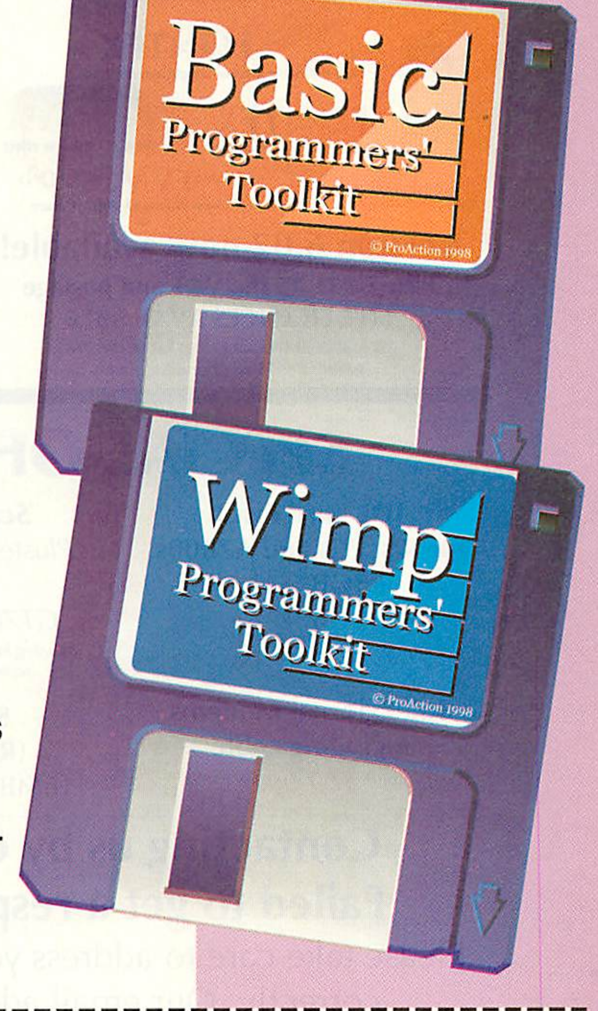




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A bright *future*

Alasdair Bailey takes a peek at BotKiller2, TEK, and Dark Future

Welcome to my humble domain, this month I will be mostly looking at the work of Artex Software as they prepare not two but three releases for 1999. A preview version of their new platformer, *BotKiller 2*, which has been created in association with Richard Wilson of Wag Software is reviewed in these pages. There's also a full preview of *TEK* and an interview with Jan Klose, one of Artex's main men.

Just in case you were getting the impression that Artex are the only ones producing home-grown games on the Acorn, there's also a preview of an exciting new game from Ben Ollivere by the name of *Dark Future*. Anyway, in the words of one of England's greatest war propaganda people, careless talk costs lives, so let's get on with the show.

BotKiller 2

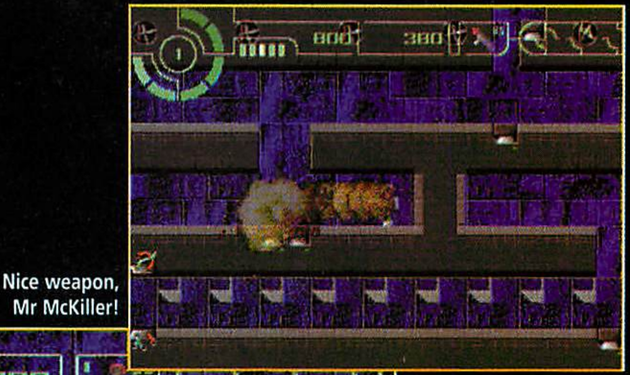
Just like its predecessor, *BotKiller 2* is all about killing robots on a distant planet in some far off time. The robots have taken control of the factory where they were previously enslaved and are behaving rather badly. What makes this worse is that it's your company that was lucky enough to get the contract to clear things up.

Although *BotKiller 2* is, in essence, a platformer, it has something over and above the bog-standard adventures of *Sonic* and chums. In Sega's highly successful series, the focus was on blasting baddies whereas in *BotKiller 2*, a strong puzzle solving element presides.

The puzzles are far more complex than those present in titles such as *Abuse* where pressing button X will open door Y. Whilst playing *BotKiller*, you will often come up against one of the three types of locked doors which require a coloured key card for access; this often leads to a lengthy trek around other areas of the level. The puzzles aren't simply restricted to opening doors either. It is often necessary to hunt down a particular weapon capable of temporarily halting the highly armoured drones in order to progress through a level. Lifts also feature in the problems to be overcome in *BotKiller*.

As with its predecessor, *BotKiller 2* features wall-mounted consoles which can be used to effect certain in-game elements. Teleporters, electric beams, lifts and the level exit status may be toggled using consoles which again add to the puzzle-based nature of this title. I won't go into the exact use of the consoles within the game but let's just say that one particular feature can make things rather tricky in some levels.

So far I've been talking mainly about the puzzle solving side of *BotKiller*. However, the game still manages to offer plenty in the robot slaying department with a wide range of different types hindering your path and an equally wide range of weapons at your disposal to deal with them. Some of your mechanical adversaries will happily walk back and forth whilst you figure out when to jump down and destroy them. However, others are a little more clever and will come rushing towards you as soon as you enter their domain. There's also gun turrets which are only vulnerable to attack whilst firing – these are not fun at the best of times! All of the enemies are well drawn and varying strengths of armour are present across the game so you can never quite tell how many shots it's going to take to kill a certain strain.



Nice weapon, Mr McKiller!

The ammunition collected throughout the levels works in a rather unique way. Collecting ammo increases a weapon's fire rate rather than stockpiling excess bullets. This feature is useful once you run out of shots because it is still possible to fire, although at a slower rate. However, the advanced weapons such as the electric gun for taking out drones and the rocket launcher still retain the conventional one unit of ammo per shot system.

Character movement is good but by no means outstanding. One nice feature is the way in which the game varies the height of a jump depending upon the amount of time the jump key is pressed down for. This is nice because as well as giving a feeling of being more in control of your player, it is also possible to carry out small jumps whilst



Boxes conceal power-ups

avoiding drones hovering overhead. However, the character movement is let down somewhat by the slow walking speed of your chappie. This often annoyed me and I found myself glancing out of the window to pass time whilst walking down long corridors.

The final in-game element which I'm going to tell you about is the shop. Although there's nothing on the same scale as the retail outlets present in *Xenon II* or *Xenocide*, one can collect coins throughout the level and spend them on health upgrades, ammo and better weapons. This is a nice feature but I'll leave it at that else I'll spoil your fun when you come to play the game.

BotKiller 2's graphics are simply good, not brilliant though, just good. They don't take advantage of the full power of the higher end machines mainly to ensure backward compatibility with 4MB ARM3 machines. However, the graphics are all very well drawn and fit nicely with the theme of the game so if that's what you're looking for in this game, you got it!

I found that this title had a good difficulty curve and the higher levels really got me thinking. *BotKiller 2* will run on any Acorn machine with an ARM3 processor and a minimum of 4MB RAM.

Product details

Product:	BotKiller 2
Price:	£15 (including VAT and P&P)
Supplier:	WAG Software, 5 Queens Close, East Markham, Nr Newark, Notts, NG22 0QY
E-mail:	wagsoft@wilsontigger.demon.co.uk
WWW:	http://www.wilsontigger.demon.co.uk/

Interview with Jan Klose

Jan Klose is a programmer at gaming supremos, Artex. Luckily, he just had time to fit in a chat with Acorn User between working on *TEK, Botkiller 2 and Iron Dignity*. The Artex team hope to be present at this year's Wakefield show on the 15/16th May so, all being well, you'll be able to meet the men behind the games.

AU: *We were all stunned by the Iron Dignity preview on last year's cover CD, when will we be able to buy the game?*

JK: To make the game a real classic, much work has to be done yet. Now that the graphics engine is almost finished, we are focussing on design and gameplay. Right now we are recruiting graphic artists, musicians and additional programmers. The release is scheduled for Summer 1999. This might shift a bit into Autumn, but I'm sure that the game will be available when you can still enjoy your Pina Colada cocktail in the garden.

AU: *Rumour has it that you're in talks with PC publishers to arrange for a PC release of Iron Dignity, how are things going on that front?*

JK: Two PC games companies are very interested in Iron Dignity, and, if all goes well, we will receive major support during the first phases of development. As the Acorn market is not strong enough to pay for massive game development, a PC release is the only possibility to make Iron Dignity really big.

AU: *Ankh featured a number of characters who really stuck out as something rather special, were any of them based upon real life people?*

JK: Well, the main character, Domi, got his name from our programmer Dominik. Furthermore, the man at the 'Egypt Burgers' stand was inspired by an African we met when travelling through Malawi; he had a very small wooden hut at the beach where he was preparing french fries, and pinned on the wall was a little sign made of paper which said 'McDonald's'. Oh, and the Pharaoh is in fact inspired by Eddie Murphy in Michael Jackson's video clip 'Remember the Time'.

AU: *Where does the name TEK come from?*

JK: It comes from 'Technology', and we simply thought it would be a nice name for a battle game set in the near future, where the player will be confronted with lots of new technologies. And to be more precise, the game's full name is 'TEK 1608' but unfortunately I am not allowed to reveal the meaning of this mysterious number.

AU: *Could you give us some idea of the plot behind TEK?*

JK: The story is set in the near future (about 2030). After a global biological disaster, people can only survive by taking a daily dose of a certain medicine. This medicine is only produced by two corporations, a European and a Japanese one. These firms have their own private armies to defend their medical factories as well as to protect their convoys and attack the other company if 'necessary'. However the situation described here is not entirely true, as there's a special plot to the story which I won't reveal yet.

AU: *Good humour was an integral part of the gameplay in Ankh. Will you be adding some humour to the battle sim genre too?*

JK: TEK is meant to get a more serious story, as it has a very dark atmosphere. However, we'll definitely include some humour at the appropriate places!

AU: *Will TEK be the best game ever?*

JK: Definitely! To be serious, there will never be a best game ever, like there will never be a best film ever. Of course it depends on how the people like it, and everyone will see it in a different light. Anyway, we will do our very best to make TEK very interesting and extremely entertaining!

AU: *What do you and the Artex team have planned after TEK and Iron Dignity?*

JK: If both productions are successful, we will definitely continue to develop computer games. So after the obligatory release of *TEK 2* and *Iron Dignity 2*, we will hopefully do another 3D game. That could possibly come in the form of a 3D realtime action/strategy game set in space.

AU: *Where do you see the Acorn market heading over the next year or so?*

JK: It depends on what happens in the next few months. Without the backing of a major company, I see a dark future arising. Acorns could go the way of almost all interesting computer platforms, like the Commodore 64 and the Amiga. The only solution to this sad end of a great platform would be the concentration on a certain niche of the PC market, backed by new hardware and software production along with at least a bit of advertising (which Acorn have never quite managed). This seems impossible without a capable company.



A planet's surface taken from Exodus

Opening doors in Ankh

TEK 1608

TEK is one of two titles currently being worked on by German coding group, Artex. Be sure to read the interview with Jan Klose alongside this preview for an insight into the workings of the whole Artex machine.

This latest offering from Artex looks set to be the best real-time strategy seen so far on our humble platform. The real-time bit means that this title will be more like the *Dunell/Command and Conquer* genre than the turn-based gameplay of the likes of *Heroes of Might and Magic 2* and *Exodus*. ie, game time passes at a constant rate rather than at the end of each 'turn'.

Having said that, *TEK*, will, by no means, be a *Command and Conquer* clone. For those of you who haven't seen the *Command and Conquer* series of PC smash hits, they're just the natural progression on from *Dunell* which managed an Acorn release way back near the beginning of time. Besides, *TEK* boasts a number of unique features such as its range of units and building construction style which I'll look at in more depth later on in this article.



TEK is set in a post-oblivion world where all surviving humans need to take a dose of a special drug every day to fight the effects of the biological agents still present in the environment. After that, the plot starts to sound rather more familiar. As these games always go, there's two corporations capable of producing this drug and guess what? Yes, you got it, they fight over precious raw materials and market share.

It is not yet clear as to whether you will have the choice of playing as the Japanese or European corporation throughout the game but what is for certain is that a wide variety of missions will be present in the one player game. Everything from protecting convoys and factories to attacking the enemy will be catered for and with a unit list to make your mouth water, *TEK* is still looking very promising indeed.

Compared to other games of this genre, at first sight *TEK* would appear to have very few units in its arsenal. But appearances aren't everything, each unit will be fully upgradable with options to add more firepower and 'additional systems' which we'll have to wait for the full game to see.

One of *TEK's* unique features is the methods employed for building both units and structures. Structures will arrive in 'parcels' which must be picked up by one of the land units and placed in their desired location ready for unpacking. *TEK's* most useful feature is its ability to form a queue of units for production so that one does not have to continually return to the factory unit during battles to order the construction of new units.

As far as graphics are concerned, *TEK* will run in 256 colours but it will use varying screen resolutions to make the most of the computer's VRAM. 640x480 resolution is offered as standard on all Risc PC machines with both 800x600 and 1024x768 available to users with VRAM. Three different terrain styles are available; jungle, ice and desert with mixtures of the three also planned.

Network play is a high priority during development and all being well, TEK should be playable across LAN, modem and serial link cable with work in progress on providing internet servers to allow up to 8 players to battle in realtime over the Net.

TEK will be distributed on CD for approximately £35 and the game should be ready in time for the Wakefield Acorn show on the 15/16th of May 1999. Since the game is intended for NC release, it should work very well on lower end Risc PCs with ARM7 machines obviously faring a little better than their ARM6 counterparts.



Land Units

Trooper: Weakest (and cheapest) unit, suitable for a number of special tasks.
Tank: Slow, heavily armoured unit with lots of firepower.
Glider: Small and quick. Comparable to the jeep but only usable on flat terrain.
Raptor: Cloned animal-like fighter with special animal senses.
Jeep: Explorer unit suitable for rough terrain.
Walker: Two-legged multi-purpose battle machine.
Spider: Six-legged battle machine very suited to rocky terrain.
Worm: Operates underground, only appearing for attacks.
Mine Layer: Small weak unit with the ability to make mine fields.

Sea Units

Amphibious Glider: Can be used as a floating bridge.

Air Units

Chopper: Quick unit with little armour.
Fighter: Strong, fast plane with the ability to throw bombs.

Support Units

Transporter: Can carry a certain number of units.
Huge Transporter: Can carry more units and perhaps even a smaller transporter.

Structures

Radar: Makes approaching enemy units visible.
Gun tower: Available in many variants.
Factory: Produces new units after a certain time.
Repair station: Repairs damaged units and heals injured soldiers.

Dark Future

That rather ominous title does not in fact reflect upon the future of our beloved Acorn platform but it is the name of a new game currently under development by Ben Ollivere. *Dark Future* is a turn-based strategy game, so you will take it in turns with your opponent to issue commands and attack other units. This will hopefully allow for the use of more meaningful tactics than in real-time games like *Command and Conquer* or *Dunell* where games often end with a massive 'tank-rush' crushing an opponent's base.

For those of you who enjoy games with plenty of plot, this one has more than most. Although I can't go into all the details here, I'll try and give some sort of general gist. The story begins when you, a wet-nosed 'Council Arbitrator' freshly graduated from the academy, are posted to some far off outpost with orders to set-up civilisation or else. This all takes place in a period in the distant future following 'the dark years' when humanity as we know it today was almost wiped out. However, the men in power are much the same as those infamous WWI generals since, to them, a million lost lives is like a drop in the ocean.

After that, things start to become rather too familiar with the old "here's a bunch of baron planets, build on them and kill anything that tries to stop you" storyline kicking in. But what else can one do in a post-apocalyptic space exploration scenario without stepping on the feet of the mighty *Elite*? From the authors writings, it would appear that *Dark Future* is aiming to be the sum-total of all strategy games before it.

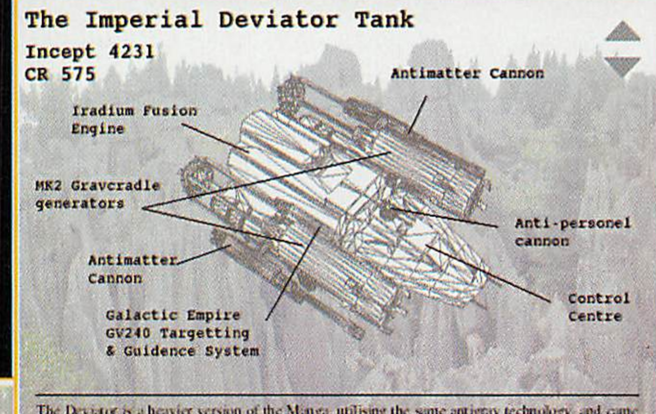
Inspiration has come from such games as *BattleTech* and the *Warhammer* series neither of which sadly never made it to the Acorn platform. However, having just said that, I'll have to contradict myself ever so slightly because Ben does not intend *Dark Future* to be another 'mega-game'. The title is set to be player rather than graphics oriented. This should be a good thing because after all, gameplay is what counts, graphics are, essentially, a periphery feature in any title.

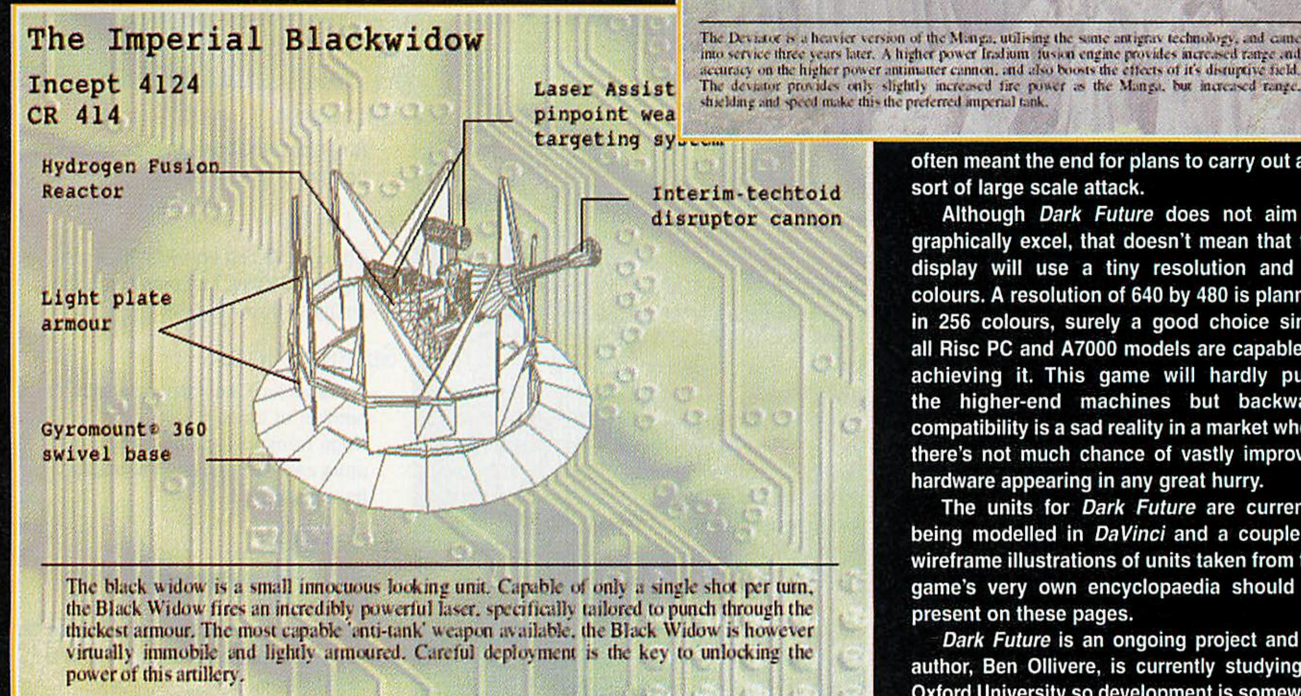
Enough of plots and aims, the game itself will boast 60 missions which can be progressed through in a non-linear fashion. On top of that, one-off battle fests against computer players and other humans via Internet or e-mail will also be possible. I'm not quite sure how e-mail play will work but one can only assume it will be a little like postal chess though we'll have to wait for release to see how things work out.

However, turn-based games do tend to be rather dull when players are separated because it's just so boring waiting for your opponent to make their moves. Let's hope that *Dark Future* somehow works around that possible glitch.

A large number of scenery types will be available and although such features don't really add much to gameplay, it can't hurt to brighten things up again every now and then. Units will be able to interact with the scenery in far more ways than in previous games of this genre. It should be possible to destroy trees, bridges and other features for those who like that kind of thing.

Up to 1000 units will be allowed per player so we hopefully won't end up in the same position as we did with *Dunell* where the dreaded 'unable to create more' message often meant the end for plans to carry out any sort of large scale attack.





Wire frame illustrations from Dark Future's encyclopaedia

Although *Dark Future* does not aim to graphically excel, that doesn't mean that the display will use a tiny resolution and 16 colours. A resolution of 640 by 480 is planned in 256 colours, surely a good choice since all Risc PC and A7000 models are capable of achieving it. This game will hardly push the higher-end machines but backward compatibility is a sad reality in a market where there's not much chance of vastly improved hardware appearing in any great hurry.

The units for *Dark Future* are currently being modelled in *DaVinci* and a couple of wireframe illustrations of units taken from the game's very own encyclopaedia should be present on these pages.

Dark Future is an ongoing project and its author, Ben Ollivere, is currently studying at Oxford University so development is somewhat slower during term-time. Expect to see the light sometime in the summer. AU

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Dave Acton and **Dave Lawrence** review the best of this months...

st★r info

"You have fifteen seconds to comply"

Author: Adam Granger

As the new millennium approaches, no doubt countless folk will invent increasingly curious and inventive ways of counting away the seconds until it arrives. Never ones to miss a bandwagon, we at *info have jumped aboard this one wholesale with the dramatically christened *!Bomb* from Adam Granger of Huddersfield. (The ! should really be after the Bomb but then I suppose it does count backwards...)

!Bomb simply counts down to a preset time. When the counter reaches zero, a program or other file may be executed. Double-click to install and click on the bomb icon to show the timer. The best font to use is Digital, which the program will try and locate. If it can't be found, dear old Homerton medium will be substituted.

Remaining time
316 DAYS 01 HRS 08 MINS 26 SEC 88

Apparently the timer display is based upon the one featured in the film Armageddon [is that the one with the talking pig? I don't get out much – DA]. In any case, you can vary the display by opening the options window from the icon bar menu.

Select a large or small delay and enter the path name of the file you want to run at 00:00:00:00, clicking Save when done. Set the target time by opening the appropriate window from the menu. By default, this has been set to midnight Jan 1st 2000.

The author guarantees the program to be "Millennium proof" and "leap-year safe", but he warns that "this program is NOT intended to be a bomb timer – it is just intended to simulate one", just in case any of you get any pyrotechnic ideas.

So, the gauntlet has been thrown down yet again and another unofficial *info challenge has been born. Let's see your Millennium countdowns. The closing date will be... oh, work it out for yourselves.

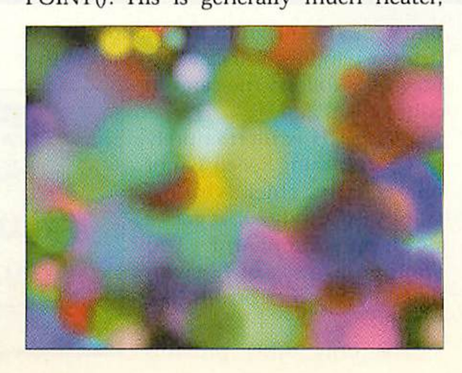
Worralorrahues

Author: Mark Adock

Mark Adock's first offering this month bears a more-than-passing resemblance to a creation of a certain Mr Vibe. If you're confused, we'll let Mark explain:

"Run this program and I'm sure you'll think that looks like Jan Vibe's TrBalls. You're right. Imagine how annoyed I was to receive my copy of AU and realise that the man himself had written an almost identical program and sent it in!

"As some sort of proof that I had written it a while ago, compare his code with mine. For some reason I chose to use direct screen access, whereas Jan used the far more elegant POINT and POINT(). His is generally much neater,



whereas mine only just squeezes into 1K. The only other differences as far as I can tell is that mine uses a smaller screen mode, and you have a choice of how the circle's transparency varies.

At the moment, FNb is called 3 times, so the transparancey is proportional to the distance from the centre. Change the program to FNa, and it will be proportional to the SQR(distance). FNc makes it proportional to the distance^2."

Oh well, great minds think alike and all that. It's quite interesting to see how a couple of our regulars tackle the same programming task.





Backdraft revisited

Author: Rick Hudson

In the Christmas 98 issue we carried a little program by the Vibester to randomly select backdrops from a wider range than is normally available. This little piece puzzled Rick Hudson no end, and he's put us right on a couple of points – thanks to Rick.

The standard texture selecting program *Boot:Choices.Boot.Textures. RTexture* does get run if you select Random from the configure utility. (That is, double click on your *!Boot*, click on Screen and then select the radio icon marked Random – this will alter the obey file *Boot:Choices.Boot.Tasks.Configure* so that *RTexture* is run.)

However, you are still limited to a fixed number of textures, so Rick modified *RTexture* to read the names of the files in the textures directory and select one at random properly. His new version is on the cover disc.

"It preserves the gizmo allowing the 'Lighter' option so that the existing T1-T7/T1L-T7L work as before. In fact any new sprites added can also have lightened 'L' variations and they will be used if selected and available (so unlightened sprites should not end with 'L').

The only problem is that the Try button in Configure appears not to use *RTexture* so clicking Set is required before the new selector is used. Well, I suppose it's not the only problem because Configure still only shows the thumbnails of the original sprites."

Painting by nimbus

Author: Mark Adcock

Have you ever layed back in a meadow on a hazy summer's afternoon, the air heavy with the humming of bees and the scent of pollen, looked up at the fluffy white clouds as they amble across the sky and thought "hang on a mo', isn't that Bob Geldof?"

Well, thanks to the miracle of modern technology, you too can create your own Band-Aid legends and the like in cumulonimbus form in the comfort of your own living room. This does of course mean that you won't having to expose your pasty programmers' complexions to the very real dangers of sunlight and fresh air.

Called simply *!Clouds*, this upper-atmospheric art program comes courtesy of regular Mark Adcock. *"!Clouds* is a program to allow you to draw clouds. It's probably the sort of thing you can do in a decent painting program, but unfortunately I don't have one. Basically it is a pixel softening routine which works in a 256 colour mode that has had a blue to white palette defined."



Cloud Controls:

Mouse left	controls the smudger
Mouse middle	controls the spray
Mouse right	controls the paint brush
up and down arrows	increase/decrease spray density
keypad 4 and 1	increase/decrease spray size
keypad 5 and 2	increase/decrease smudger size
keypad 6 and 3	increase/decrease paint brush size
s	save screen
l	load screen
delete	clear screen
spacebar	recompile code + redefine brush shapes

Note that after you change the size of the smudger or the paint brush, you must press Space to recompile the assembly code and redefine the brush shapes. Drawing clouds is thus very simple – spray some dots on the screen in the desired place with Menu and then smudge them or fade them with Select or Adjust.

Mark suggests trying to use several buttons at once and varying the sizes of the brushes and spray densities for a range of effects. The only tricky bit code-wise, says Mark, was saving the image as a sprite. Since the program uses a 256-colour mode and a proper 256-colour palette, OS_SpriteOp doesn't quite do what you want. You have to create a sprite without a palette and then manually tinker with the sprite file, increasing a few of the offsets by 2048 (8 bytes per palette entry).

The palette is then copied into the artificially created space in the sprite. Thereafter, the sprite will behave as expected, *!Paint* and OS_SpriteOp recognising the full palette.

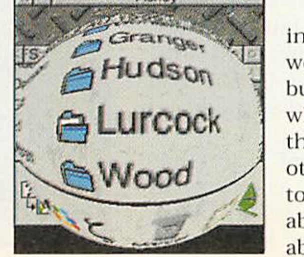
Looks fishy to me

Author: Pontus Lurcock

We start a small, but exquisitely fashioned fish theme now, with *!Fishey* from regular Pontus Lurcock.

"!Fishey works like the ubiquitous desktop magnifiers that we all know and love, with the difference that it produces a 'fish-eye' distortion/magnification effect (i.e. the magnification is greatest at the centre and zero at the edges; a bit like looking through a particularly thick lens)."

A little options window offers control over how often the magnified image is updated, the magnification and size of fish-eye window. You can also ask that the magnifier follows the caret in editors like *!Zap*.



"!Fishey is written entirely in C, so blazing speed is not one of its chief virtues" admits Pontus. [Well, it goes a storm on a StrongArm – DA] Pontus uses a size of 128 with update every 5 cs on his Risc PC 600.

The only other provisos are that RISC OS 3.10 or later is required, and the gadget won't work in 4 or 2 colour modes.

And for those who are interested in how it all works, Pontus says: *"!Fishey* builds a table of offsets from which to read in pixels of the display (doing it the other way round would lead to gaps, probably). That's about all there is to be said about it." Fair dos.



Man of letters

Author: Bill Darlington

The man in this case is Bill Darlington, of Glasgow. The letters are in his own font, Ovoid which you'll find on the cover disc. Bill responded to an appeal in the January issue for any fonts you might have designed and continues to demonstrate the principle that we'll put anything in *info if it's good – not just plasma-like stringy doodly things (although we still love them too).



Ovoid is apparently loosely based on Ovine from the Electronic Font Foundry's PD disc. Artworks' Splash is another clone of this font. Bill uses his creation for posters, OHP sheets and all sorts.

He recently upgraded the font, adding in all the other characters (it was originally just an A-Z, 0-9 and a few squiggles effort), smoothing out lumpy curves, reducing the numbers of control points (to speed redraw) and generally tidying everything up. Proper kerning data, scaffolding and hinting was also added. In keeping with this Euro-friendly times, the official Euroglyph character is featured too.

All of this was achieved using *!FontEd* (0.32), iSV's *!FontKern* (2.91) and David Pilling's *!D2Font* (1.03). The latter was apparently used for the Spanish punctuation marks. "Note that in adding scaffolds, I discovered an undocumented (I think) feature of *!FontEd.* The *!Help* file points out that Adjust-dragging one character into another allows the other to inherit the outlines of the first.

This is useful in creating composites, such as accented characters. However, *!Help* does not mention the following. If you Alt-Adjust-drag, the second character can inherit the scaffolding of the first. This makes it easier to ensure consistency of style, size and shape between characters with common elements, e.g., B, P & R; C & G; a & d; E, F, L, Æ & Œ; D & ; f, fi & fl.

"Many PD fonts are redrawn from scans, with little regard for precise consistency between similar characters. If you add scaffolds to a 'parent' character, the 'descendent' can then be tweaked to fit the scaffold."

Rock-and-Roll-tastic

Author: Keith Wood

Keith Wood (ex Rolling Stones member?) reveales his musical roots this month with a submission, of epic proportions. Called simply *Epic,* it comes as an STracker file, which you wll be able to play and enjoy with almost anything, including *!Flux.*

Exhibiting modesty not entirely characteristic of the rock 'n' roll lifestyle, Keith says "it's not very epic but it's the only decent tune I was able to get out of Coconizer (which is very good), though I converted it to Tracker (STmodule) format, and then STracker format. The samples have survived the transitions reasonably well. Like most music, it requires playing through a large amplifier with the bass turned up." Very good too.

Any old modules, any old modules, any any any old modules...

Author: Scott Boham

Unfortunately, the rag and bone men of yesteryear never really moved into the age of technology, so all those useless, obsolete programs and modules that lie around in directories are doing nothing, except, er, lying around doing nothing. Until now that is. Scott Boham comes to the rescue with *ClearSyst* – a utility to spot those ancient artefacts that have lurked in your *!System* directory for years.

"*ClearSyst* searches through your system directory and tells you if any modules are in *!System* which have a lower version number than the one stored in ROM." You then have the choice of deleted them, or keeping them for posterity.

Sorted

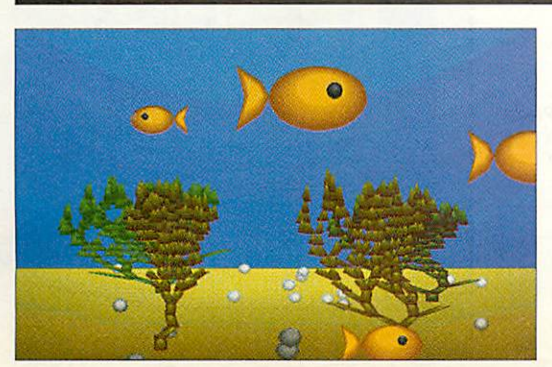
Author: Scott Boham

Ever wondered what would happen if you sorted the screen memory? Well wonder no more. Evidently Scott Boham has similary pondered such matters, and wrote *Fx* to demonstrate what would happen. For a 60-byte program, the results are really quite good! The RISC OS OS_HeapSort call is used for the purpose. In fact, aside from novelty value, sorting the screen is not entirely pointless – it gives a surprising good picture of what exactly goes on using different sort methods.

To illustrate this, we knocked up another screen sorter called *Sorted.* This uses the C function qsort to quicksort the screen memory. Like Scott's program, the screen is treated as an array of integers rather than bytes. Although the end result is the same, the intermediate jiggling of words is surprisingly different. Sadly, the overheads of C mean that *Sorted* is some 90 times the size of *Fx!* It would be fairly interesting to watch the other main sort types in this way I dare say. Well, if there was nothing much on the telly.

Tanks for the memory

Author: Toby Hunt



Very little memory is actually occupied by this particular tank. Our fishy theme continues, and in fact closes with this under 4K pond life simulator from Toby Hunt.

Fish is, according to its creator, "a pseudo-3D, polygon mapped, real-time, monitor-type independent, sort of optimised, crunched, one file, self-decompressing BASIC fish generator." Well, it's as well to get such details right.

"Make sure you have around 600K of free memory [I love that – a three and a half K prog that needs 600K – DA] and double click. The graphics are all created in real-time so there is a longish pause between the recursive seaweed generation finishing and the fish appearing. Don't panic if nothing seems to be happening, as long as the hourglass is still going, everything is probably still okay.

"The program should work on any 32-bit Acorn with 1Mb of RAM and RISC OS 3. It's StrongARM friendly too."



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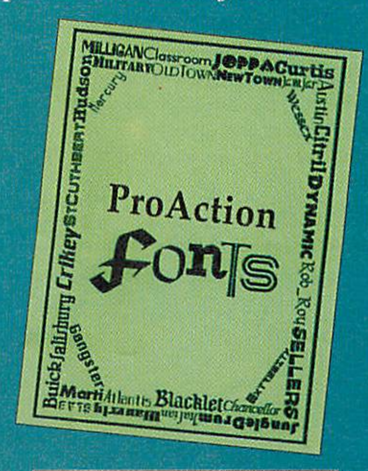
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"He came straight for me, and went dark"

Author: Richard Wareham

A RISC OS implementation of an artifical intelligence classic now, from Richard Wareham. This has been lying in the *info vaults for some time, so apologies to Richard for leaving it so long. The author describes the background to *!Markov....*

"A few years ago, there appeared on one of the Usenet News a person called Mark V. Shaney. He replied to peoples articles in a manner which could almost be called satirical. After many queries on the identity of Mark it was admitted that Mark V. Shaney was in fact an Artificial Intelligence program designed to comment on pieces of text given to it. *!Markov* is a program which implements the algorithm behind Mark V. Shaney (a corruption of Markov Chain, the algorithm in question)."

Richard's version is in C and is designed to run from the command line, although a simple Wimp front end has been added. The syntax is simply:

```
*Markov <input filename> <output
filenam> <words>
```

The final parameter specifies how many words the output commentary should contain. Alternatively, drop a text file onto the *!Markov* icon and a save window opens. Set the number of words and enter a filename. The work will be done in a task window.

"*!Markov* can, given suitable input, produce a remarkably clever output (fooling some people into thinking it was written by a human). In most cases it will be necessary to correct some minor grammatical errors and the more libelious comments. Some examples of *!Markov's* output are included on the cover disc:

TheWSC? is Mark V. Shaneys comical look at life in 1920's America. *TheTM?* is Mark's re-mix of the classic 'The Time Machine' by H. G. Wells.

N.B. This textfile needed very little alteration from the original [and provided the title for this piece – DA]. After writing it I fed this manual into Mark. He produced the file *Manual?*.

I admit that some nonsense was produced (including repeating 'this text-file' 20 times) but these have been edited out and what remains is, in my view, of great interest to psychologists as it shows what Mark thinks of himself. It also includes a wonderful comment on why the source is unreadable which I guarantee was produced entirely on his own."

Apparently, *!Markov* does best with text files containing few headings and no line-feeds used to create a word-wrap. It does help however if the paragraphs are still seperated. So use *!Zap/!Edit* to pre-format files accordingly if necessary.

How it all works

Once Upon a time there lived a young man called Bob. He and his friend
:
and so finally they all lived happily ever after.

UPON
HE
HE
WHEN
SOME
JOHN
THEY
JOHN
BOB
LISTED
FOUND
HE

"*!Markov* looks as though it reads the text and produces a sometimes amusing, commentry on the text. As with most programs of this type, the actual algorithm is remarkably simple.

"The program first loads the text into memory. It then picks the first symbol (in this case the first word) and searches through the text for occurences of that symbol. Each time it finds one it places the next symbol (or next word) into a list. When finished, a symbol is chosen at random and printed into the text file.

"This symbol is then treated in the same way as the first until the required number of symbols has been reached. Note, *!Markov's* symbols are case-sensitive and can include question marks, exclamation marks, periods, plings, etc. This is so sentences can be built up, as opposed to a long stream of words.

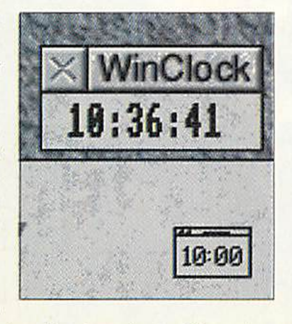
"Because the frequencies of the symbols are, indirectly, taken into account (by being able to include symbols more than once), the output represents a probabalistic representation of the original text. No account is taken of the rules of grammar, yet sometimes the output is surprisingly accurate."

Late arrivals for the Rin and Fatso show

Our challenge to do something interesting with the drawfiles of the *info pets – Rin and Fatso – still stands and it's not too late to send us your entries. See last month's issue for full details. So get doodling and let's see what amusing (or more likely, unpleasant and disturbing) things you can do to our poor four-legged vector friends.

Half-time

Author: Robert Guite



Well, half a clock but it shows the full time. *!WinClock* is a tiny desktop timekeeper from Robert Guite of Newbury.

"*!WinClock* is a digital clock aplication which displays the current time in a window. It is designed to be small in both the memory used and disk space used, and as such it only displays the time (format: hours, minutes and seconds)." I must confess to liking little windows *like that of !Winclock* – must be my minimalist leanings. If you've come up with any desktop miniatures, send them in.

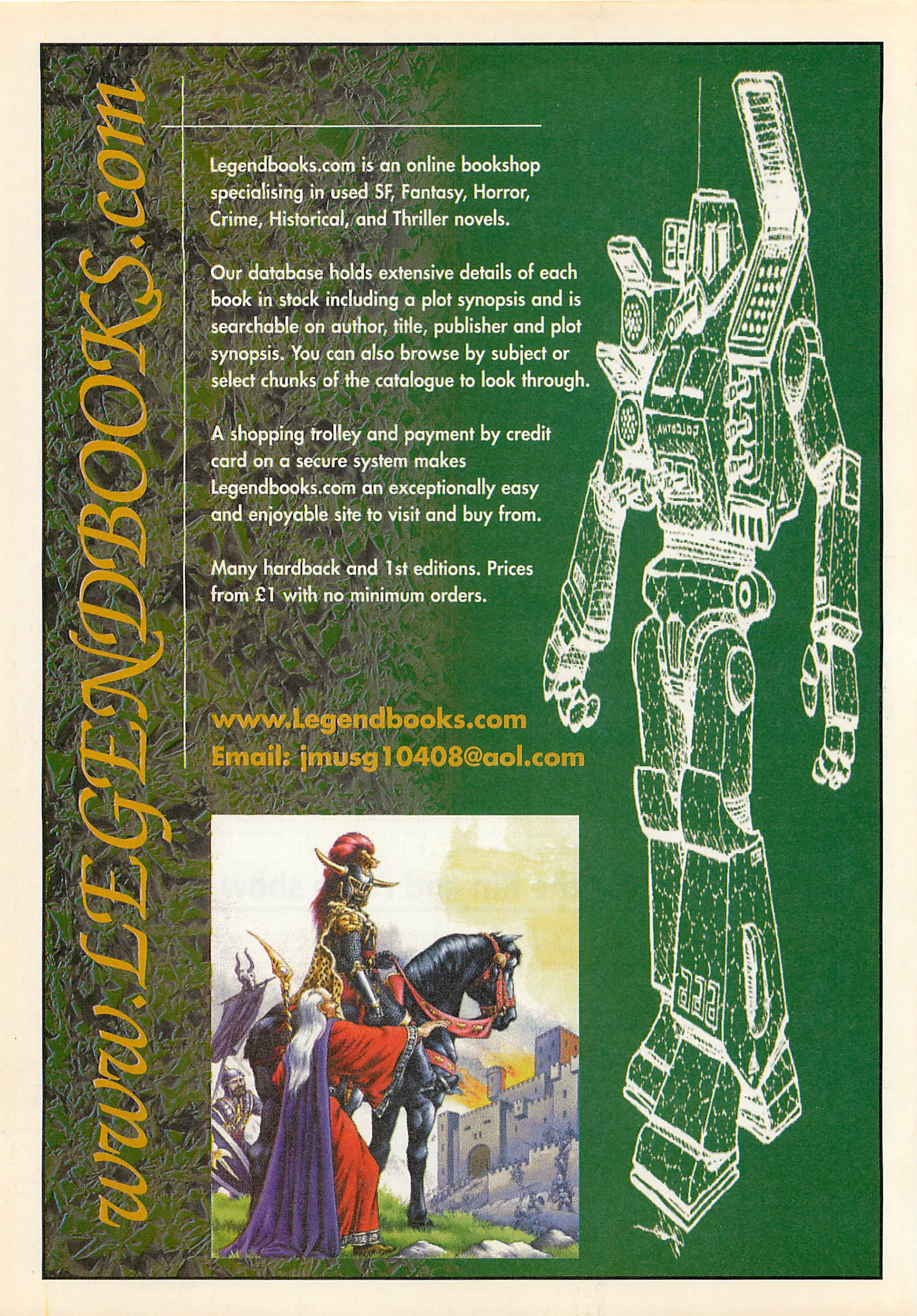
*QUIT

All submissions if you please – applications, doodles, hints, tips, stretched cats and squashed dogs, to:

***INFO, Acorn User, Tau Press, Media House, Adlington Park, Macclesfield SK10 4NP**

or, e-mail us (including your real address please) at: starinfo@acornuser.com

No e-mails longer than 100K please. Screenshots, background info and customisation ideas are always most welcome. Please put your name, address and program title on every disc and include a text file containing your name, address, disc contents and program details. An SAE will ensure your discs are returned. If you are responding to one of our challenges, please mark your envelope accordingly. *info submissions only please.


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Education news

Quest for adventure

Looking for new resources on the Web? US-based Quest have some amazing ongoing projects all over the world. Some are free, some require subscription. One of their latest is *The Galapagos Quest* Web site launched on 22 February – http://quest.classroom.com/galapagos1999/splash.asp – one week before the expedition began. One of the goals of this quest is to engage students in making an informed decision about the environmental status of the Galapagos Islands.

Each week, the team of experts on the ground present to the Web audience information about a particular topic of concern. Students are then asked to make decisions about these issues. At the end of the quest, a Student Declaration will be presented to major environmental decision-makers.

Register your interest and you'll receive a Quest Announce newsletter. For instance, with the Galapagos project a new feature is put before your class each week. *Gross & Disgusting* was on offer the first week of the expedition – a sure fire hit, this underlines the fact that sometimes the things animals and plants do can be downright slimy, nasty and smelly. A close-up look at nature at its most gross which comes with classroom activities and lesson plans, and though aimed at the US curriculum there are easily adapted for use in the UK.

One of the Galapagos quest site features is the Quest Library. In here you will find thousands of excellent Web sites that will help you and your class learn about Galapagos-related topics. Useful for research, background information, or to show what's available on the Internet. For instance, the informative and funny view of the world of slimy gooh and stinky smells at: http://www.yucky.com

Other ongoing projects are *Dinosaurs Alive!* and *Blue Ice – Focus on Antarctica* with children researching animals and sending reports, art work, poetry, and questions to special online guests. You can find Dinosaurs Alive at http://www.onlineclass.com/Dinosaurs/students.htm and don't miss the Stegasaurus chalk, the dinosaur cake and the T-Rex masks made by Curwensville Elementary. The work done by children for Blue Ice is at http://www.onlineclass.com/BI/creativekids.html

New projects starting anytime now are:

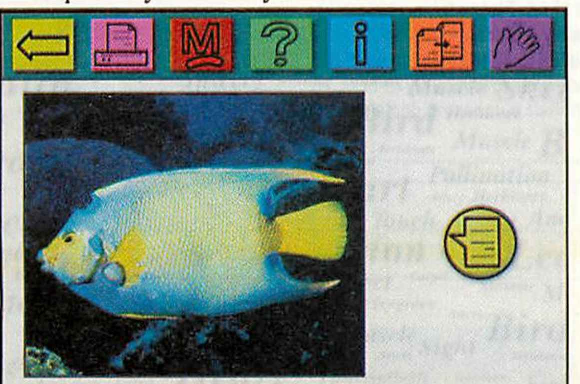


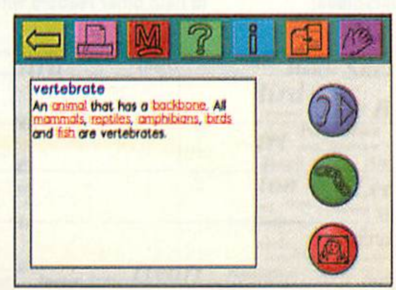
Rivers of Life, Mississippi Adventure where John Shepard sets off with a group of students for his annual trip on the Mississippi. You can follow his observations of river life and keep track of the river flood stage. Students from around the world will be watching the Mississippi as an introduction to rivers and watersheds in the third year of this program.

Then there's *DoodleOpolis*, an art and architecture activity. Originally created by the American Institute of Architects, Minnesota, this gets children out into the neighbourhood to study and draw their environment. If it's still too muddy, stay inside to build a model village with help from online architects.

Core resource

Science Keywords – The Living World is a new program from Sherston Software (01666 843200) which is full of straightforward explanations of the phrases and words concerning the science of living. All text can be read aloud to you making it suitable for children of all reading ages. However, this is aimed primarily at 7 to 11-year-olds. As well as helping children to understand essential scientific language and concepts, this CD-ROM teaches valuable information and retrieval skills. Priced at £29.95 a book version is also available written by Karen Bryant-Mole and published by Wayland. Sherston plan to continue developing other complementary CD-ROMs, with other titles to follow shortly being: English Keywords, Maths Keywords and a second volume of Science Keywords – The Material World.





Award winners

The awards at BETT this year had a different feel and format. Now renamed the BETT Awards, first place in the Primary Software Category went to Textease Multimedia from Softease while the Primary Equipment Awards went to that classroom favourite, the Roamer from Valiant Technology.

When it came to online resources Argo Interactive's Argosphere was nominated as was Biz/Ed – Business Education on the Internet, but the award went to Tesco Schoolnet 2000's Year of Reading site: www.yearofreading.org.uk

Contacting me

You can contact the Education page by writing to me, Pam Turnbull at Acorn User, Tau Press, Media House, Adlington Park, Macclesfield SK10 4NP or e-mail: educ@acornuser.com

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The way of the world

So what exactly do you know about the world in which we live? **Pam Turnbull** looks at the World Factbook

Encyclopaedias for the Acorn are not exactly thick on the ground so it was with some interest that I popped this CD-ROM into the drive. This is not an Encarta but rather a reader for the data supplied by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) on over 260 countries and regions.

I found the history of why and how this data has been collated and published over the 54 years of its existence as fascinating (you can find it by pressing the i button) as the incredibly detailed information on every country large and small ready to be printed out or saved.

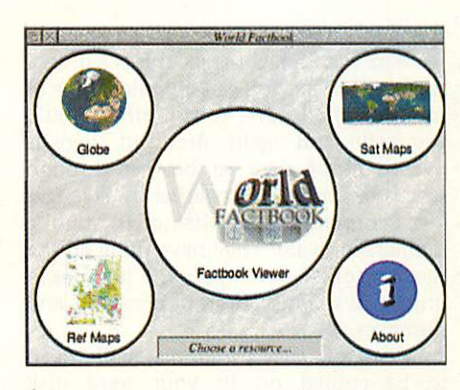
Choose your country from the list, click *Go* and see the location before you. You're shown the flag, click the loudspeaker to hear the National Anthem and read about its true and comparative size to others on the planet, find out about land boundaries, coastline, maritime claims, international agreements, current environmental issues, natural hazards, climate and terrain. Scroll down and see statistics relating to the population: age, mortality rates, gender ratio, fertility, nationality, ethnic mix, religions, language and literacy. Other sections on government, economy, communications, transport, military, and trans-national issues (war in other words) are just as detailed.



Did you know that the Republic of the Marshall Islands have an outstanding claim for Wake Island from the USA? Never heard of the place? Well it's situated between Hawaii and Papua New Guinea and this collection of 1552 islands and 2 chains of atolls is best known for one tiny atoll – Bikini.

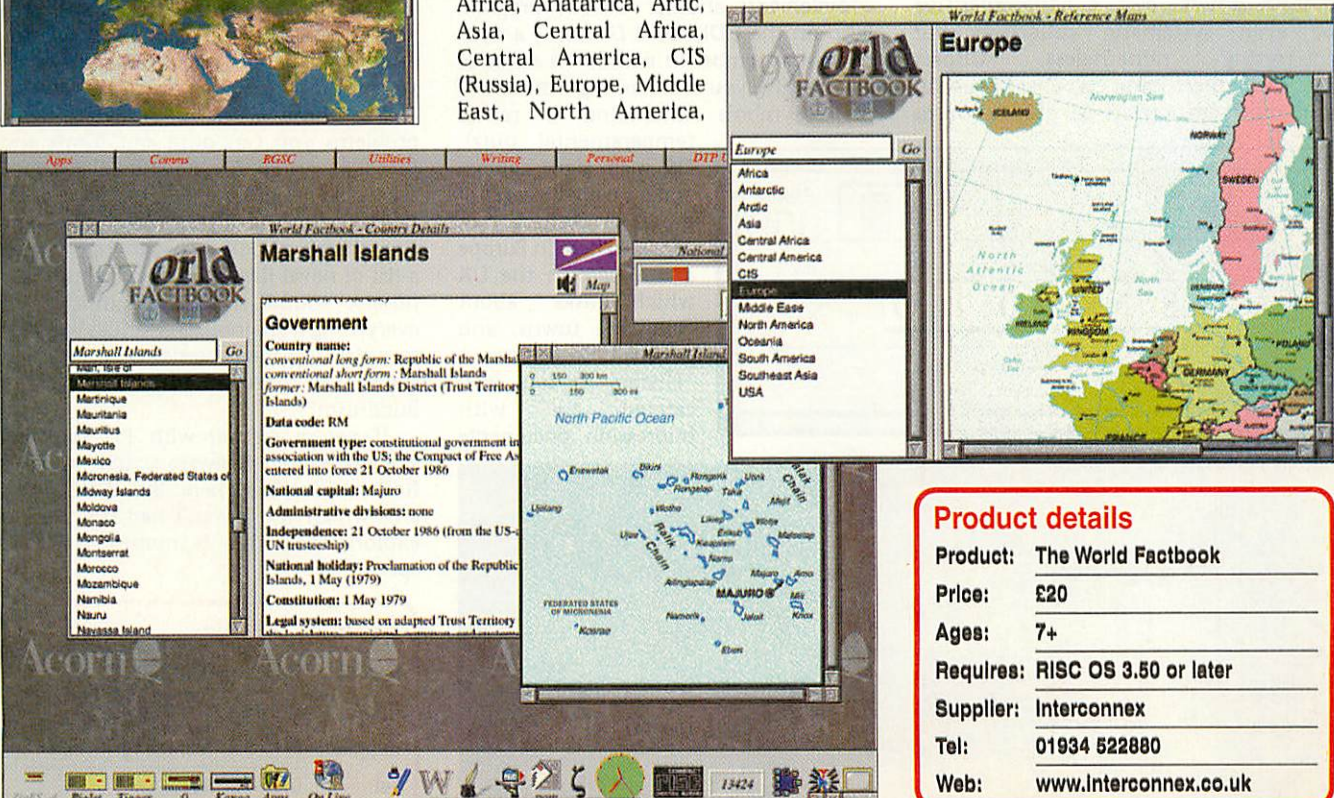
Although the Factbook is the central program you're also given three extra programs. The *Globe* is simply a four-way rotating sphere allowing you to see the world in glorious technicolour. Or how about the *Reference* and *Satellite Maps*?

Choose the former and you can access Africa, Anatartica, Artic, Asia, Central Africa, Central America, CIS (Russia), Europe, Middle East, North America, Oceania, South America, SE Asia and the USA. You can scroll these maps along and print if and when you want. The satellite maps let you see images from space in three sizes scrolling along to find what you're looking for.



One thing you should always look out for – whatever the reference work – is how up-to-date the information is. Interconnex will be using the 1998 data as soon as it becomes available, probably around April, offering a replacement CD to existing users for a nominal fee (to cover the new disc and postage).

The bottom line is that this is an absolute must whether you're a teacher or just someone who loves astounding facts and figures. AU



Product details

Product:	The World Factbook
Price:	£20
Ages:	7+
Requires:	RISC OS 3.50 or later
Supplier:	Interconnex
Tel:	01934 522880
Web:	www.interconnex.co.uk

Getting value for money

Pam Turnbull looks at a PD solution to improving educational resources

While there is no fancy introduction or loading sequence, this is a disk of resources which you can dip into. Some of the files you'll never touch, others you'll use again and again. Archived there is over 1GB of data to browse through which has been put together by Five Star – a company specialising in public domain software. They have done all the scouring of PD developers and libraries to bring you a compilation of programs and resources.

Most of the programs will need to be copied on to your hard disk before running, and even if some will run straight from the CD-ROM it's a good routine to get into. As is pressing CtrlBreak after a demo so as to clear the memory. Yes, there are some demos here but they are few and far between.

So what do you get? There are 39 fonts, from Architect to Tekton. Converted from Type 1 fonts by Acorn's *!T1ToFont* utility this means they will only work on RISC OS 3 machines. You get one or two members of a font family and most make interesting fonts for headings, displays and so on.

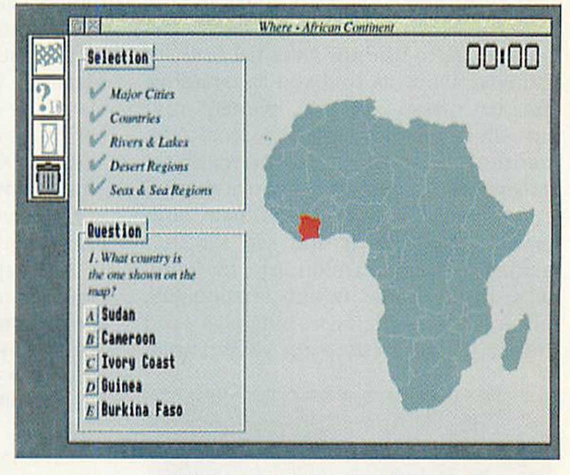
For the art lover there is a folder called just *Art* which gives you access to some Monet, Van Gogh and a selection of 17 Escher creations among others. Not a comprehensive or even systematic collection but interesting nonetheless. Clipart on the other hand is always useful and there are aircraft to display words saved as JPEGs, sprites, or drawfiles whether you want animals, buildings, borders, cars, maps and so on. Though varying in quality there are over 300 to choose from.

I was a bit dubious when I saw the Games folder but this collection of 16 is quite diverse with some puzzles like Target which are useful for developing maths skills as well as demos of commercial products.

Subject specific folders are available for geography, history, maths and RE. Geographers can access a Genesis application called *Explore Flamborough Head* for teaching about a contrasting UK locality in the primary school. As well as maps, text, graphics and photographs, it complements another Genesis program (also on the CD) called *Glasson* – a dock near Morecombe. In addition a series of utilities give you multitasking windows of map symbols (including a rather temperamental quiz), OS map signs, globes and a lovely little set of quizzes: Where in Africa, Where in Europe and Where in the UK which asks about countries, towns, and geographical features.

History is less well catered for with Impression documents covering the chronology of and essays on Shakespeare and his contemporaries, information and images on Hungary, texts from Gettysberg and the Battle of The Angle from the American Civil War, as well as others from modern conflicts in the two World Wars and ones from more recent trouble in Israel. While the Religion directory is a collection of sprite files.

The Language directory mixes modern languages with the excellent little Spanish, French and German vocabulary and pronunciation tutors with CLISP for budding programmers. Open the Maths and Science folder for a host of programs and utilities including some little gems – and there's another directory covering space.



For those with time management problems you can print out forms and files for your Filofax, download and copy across some programs for your Pocket Book/Psion. And if you've got any spare time there's a book on becoming a writer, a list of naval flags, anagram creators and posers, sound files, and utilities on everything from joining text files together to a desktop metronome. Or how about some Web sites on rainforests to Zen Buddhism?

If you're *au fait* with PD software, shareware, and freeware you'll probably find nothing new here. But if this is an area which you haven't had the time to explore then this is money well spent. AU



Product details

Product:	**Educational CD-ROM**
Price:	**£25.75**
Supplier:	**Five Star Marketing**
Tel:	**0181-950 4973**

Shine a light

Mike Cook magics up a light pen

I told you older computers are better, and this month's project illustrates the point. One of the hidden gems of the original Model B was its ability to use a light pen. Not that it took much designing you understand, it came free as part of the graphics controller chip. It simply consisted of a hardware register that, on receipt of a pulse, captured the state of the counters defining the position of the spot on the TV screen. We are not so fortunate with the later generations of graphics controller chips, if we want a light pen we have to do it the hard way.

In fact, in my Body Build article in the November '92 issue of *The Micro User* I showed you how to do it the hard way. However, that only worked with TV format displays and while the same thing could be extended to cope with other monitor standards it was complex enough then, and the modifications would make it more complex still. Fortunately the PIC chip offers the opportunity for a great simplification of the circuit.

Let's start off with a little reminder about what we are trying to do. A TV or monitor works by directing a bright spot to perform a zig-zag scan across the screen from top to bottom as shown in Figure I. The computer keeps track of this spot by issuing pulses, one tells the spot to start off at the top (the frame sync) the other tells it to start a left to right sweep – the line-sync pulse. If we have something to detect the light as the spot whizzes past we can work out the position of the light detector from the timing of the pulse it gives.

The Y coordinate can be found by counting how many line-sync pulses there have been since the last frame-sync pulse. The X coordinate is a bit more complex, to find that we have to time how much time has passed since the last line-sync pulse. By knowing how long the spot takes to move over the length of a whole line we can find the fraction of how far across the screen the detector is placed. This is complicated by the fact that different monitor standards use different amounts of time to complete this journey. In fact this time is so short that it pushes the speed of the PIC chip to its limits, it would be nice to have a bit more speed.

The hardware is comparatively simple and is very close to our standard PIC/Serial configuration, it is shown in Figure II. This circuit doesn't even need a 5 volt supply because we can tap it off the video socket of a Risc PC. However, there is a hidden complication when it comes to making this, it's those innocent-looking lines that say line and frame sync. These signals are only available at the monitor connector and so I had to make a special adaptor to get at them.

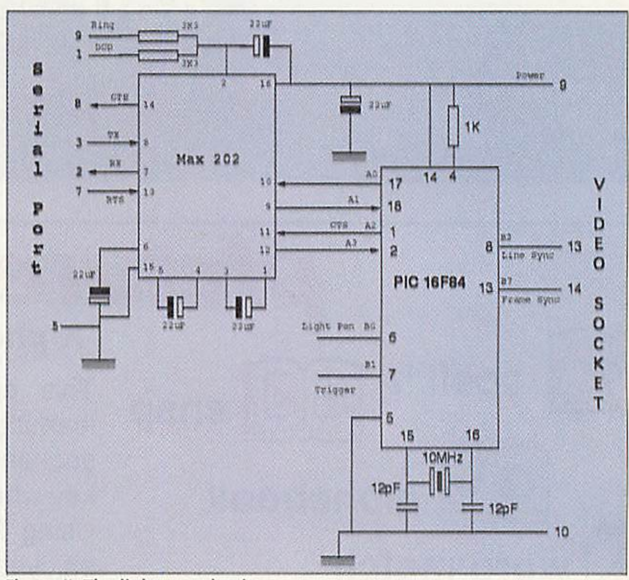


Figure II: The light pen circuit

From the Risc PC the monitor is connected using a three row high density D-type connector, we need to pass on all the signals and tap off the sync pulses and the power. If you just use wires you run the risk (great name for a series of articles) of getting impedance discontinuities that shows itself as shadows on vertical edges. To avoid this we have to be careful making the connector.

Take a plug and socket and line them up, back to back, using nuts and bolts. Adjust the nuts so that the distance between the connectors has the centre row of connectors just touching. Then take a small piece of tinned copper wire, lay it in the centre row cups and solder it up. Now is a good time to make the power tap-off using insulated wire to pins 9 and 10.

Next you can wire up the two outer rows in the same manner using slightly longer pieces of wire. Note that if you get the length right you can push both ends inside the hollow connection tubes. There is no need to make the connections across pins 4 and 15 as these are not connected to anything. The sync pulses can be tapped off in the same way as the power connections with multi-stranded insulated wire. Be very careful not to short out any of the other connections when you make the tap connections.

Once the adaptor is wired up the nuts and bolts can be removed and the whole

Figure I: How the TV raster is formed

thing holds together. The arrangement can be covered in either epoxy resin or silicon rubber. Broad masking tape can be used as a temporary mould, the construction steps are shown in Figure III.

If your computer hasn't got a 15-way video connector you will have to supply a separate 5 volts power and make the appropriate connections. If it hasn't got a separate line and sync output you will need to add the sync separator circuit in Figure IV.

Now we have to make the light pen itself and here is where you can do a little experimentation. What we need is a fast sensor capable of producing a pulse when the monitor spot whizzes past. The most suitable type are those with a built-in amplifier and detector so that they give a logic pulse output. Figure V shows the connection for two types of sensor. You could also use the type that are coupled using fibre optics and build the fibre into a pen. However, the problem here is that unless you properly polish the end of the fibre you can lose a lot of the light. The other thing about the sensor is that you are likely only to be able to pick up a pulse when the screen is showing white, if you want to detect other colours then you will need a light sensor without a detector and an extra amplifier.

Finally you might want to use one of those light guns that attach to console games. These are quite cheap and come with a built-in amplifier, they are basically the same for all console, only the pin out wiring alters. Figure VI shows the circuit for the Sega Light Phaser. The trigger input to the PIC circuit in Figure II stops pulses being detected when the input is low. As it floats high with nothing connected to it you can just leave it unconnected if you want. However, if you are especially clever you could incorporate a push switch into the pen mounting that gets activated when the user presses the pen to the screen.

So how do we go about turning these pulses into useful information? The answer lies in the PIC software. The circuit is being fed with frame-sync and line-sync pulses as well as the light-pen pulse, so what the software has to do is to is to time the relationship between them. This is aided by the hardware counter built into the PIC chip, this can be set to increment automatically every clock cycle independently of what software is being executed.

Basically the main loop of the program sits there looking for line-sync pulses, when it sees one it zeros this counter and increments a 'line' counter in the controller's memory. Now the light pen is connected to port B0 which is set to generate an interrupt when it receives a pulse. The interrupt service routine then

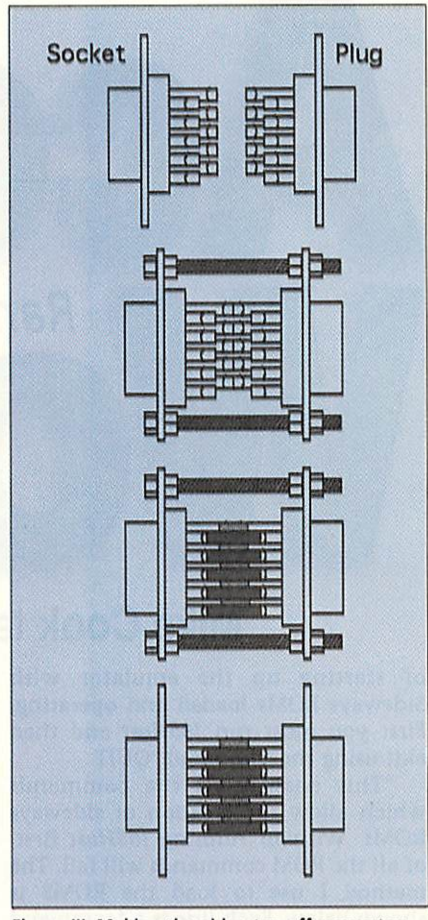


Figure III: Making the video tap off connector

simply sends the value of the two counters. As the 'line' counter can go over 256 it uses two memory locations. Therefore, providing the trigger input is high the PIC circuit sends back three bytes to the computer every time the monitor spot crosses the detector. Finally the frame-sync pulse also generates an interrupt and the interrupt service routine for this simply resets the line counter. These is also a bit of code that ensures a set of readings are sent only once every frame. The software listing is on the cover disc.

Finally there is an application to test the numbers sent back from the light pen,

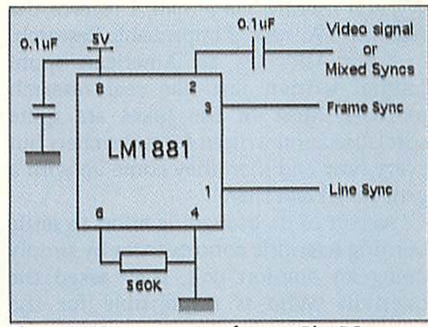


Figure IV: Sync separator for non Risc PCs

I found the best way to use it was to have a couple of *!Edit* windows open, one long and thin the other narrow and tall. I use this application because it gives you a nice white background that gives plenty of light, even then you might have to turn up the brightness a touch until you get it responding. You will notice that while the Y values change smoothly as you go down the screen the X values seem to jump at one point.

This is perfectly natural and is due to the time delays between resetting the counter and taking the readings, in fact the same thing happened on the old model B. If you are writing your own applications you will have to take this into account, note that the X value will also depend upon the screen mode.

Well that about wraps it up for this project, as ever there are lots of variations you can make to customise your own system. See you next month with something else the PIC can do. AU

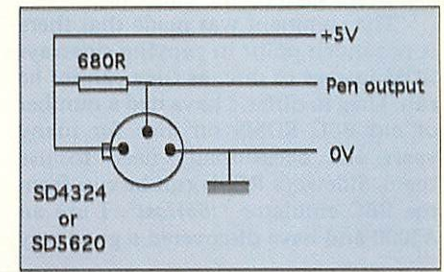


Figure V: The light detector

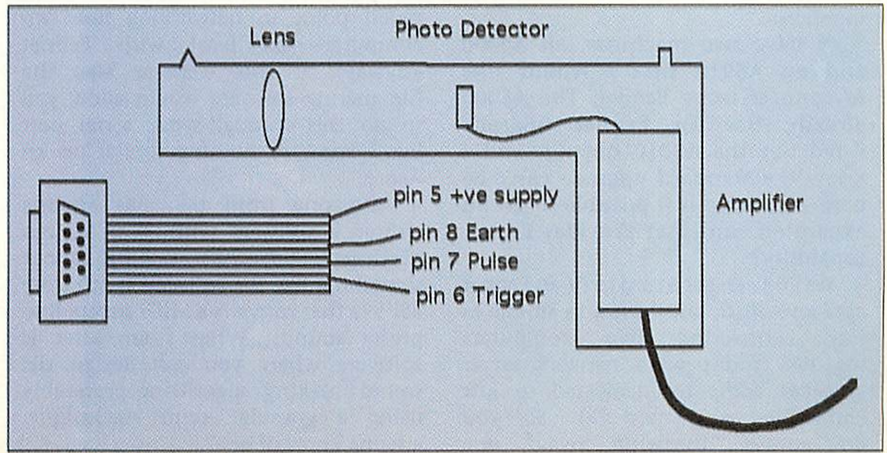
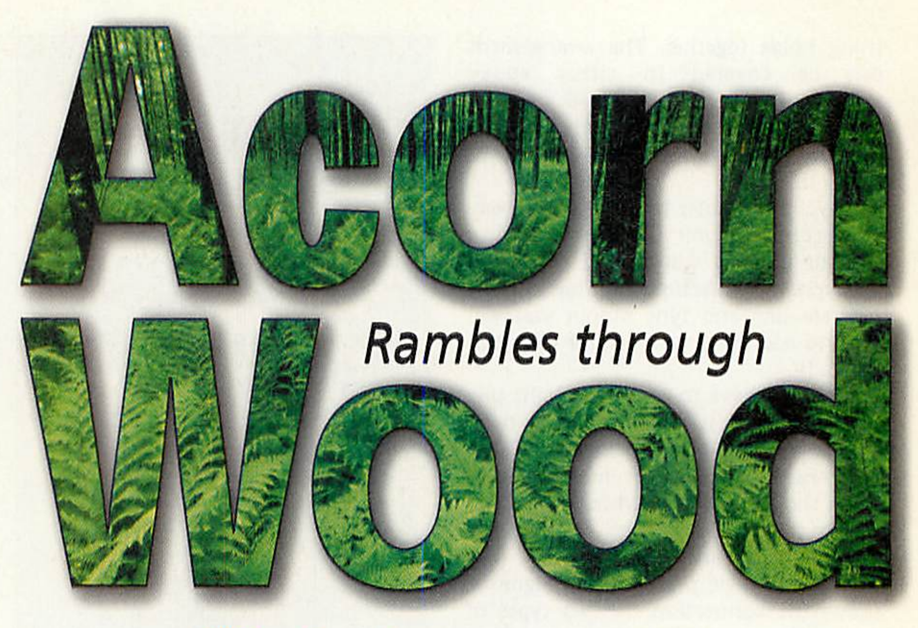


Figure VI: The Sega light phaser connections



Acorn Wood

Rambles through

Mike Cook takes some AIR

Each month, via e-mail, I receive the 'mini-Annals of Improbable Research' or 'mini-AIR', it's an American spoof journal written just like real research journals. Most of the jokes are quite specialised and written for researchers but every now and then they come up with a gem we all can share.

As part of their ongoing effort to settle burning scientific controversies by simply doing an opinion poll, they asked the question 'Who is responsible for the Millennium bug?'. This is so that the person responsible could be tortured and executed on January 1, 2000, and again on January 1, 2001, to make us all feel better. The winner you might have guessed was Bill Gates, a typical answer being: "I think it's also possible to hold him responsible for every miserable thing that's ever happened anywhere or anytime." Second place was Jesus with such reasons as: "His nomination has redeeming factors. If we're wrong, he's likely to forgive us, and of all those nominated he's the most likely to be available for a second killing in the following calendar year."

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Dr A J Lindop, from Farnborough was rather late in getting his October '98 issue, while we covered most of the solution in the Christmas special nevertheless he has a different slant on the solution.

"The comment was made that there is not much point in copying sideways ROM images to disc, as they cannot be run. I beg to differ. I have had a number of old BBC ROMS on disk for many years and occasionally need to use them. Sideways ROMs can be run from the BBC emulator "*!65Host*". I use an A5000 and have discovered a good way of starting up the emulator with Sideways ROMs loaded and operating. First you must run *!65Host* and then exit using the command *QUIT.

"This enables all the commands which allow the creation of sideways ROMs. Without running *!65Host* first, of all the ROM commands will fail. The method I use to load the ROMS is shown below. Each line is a *command and I save them in an Obey File:

```
Mount 4
DIR $.BBC.ROMS
AllocateROM 14 4000
LinkROM 14 "ADE"
MakeROM 14
EmulateBBC
```

"The above command lines are explained below:

"*Mount 4*, is used to mount the appropriate (hard) disk. This should be changed to match the local disk system. Using '0' would mount the 3.5in floppy disk drive. The DIR statement points to the directory holding the ROM images if it is necessary.

"Lines 3, 4, and 5 must all contain the same sideways ROM/RAM location. In this case location number 14 is used. As expected the *AllocateROM* command allocates ROM 14 with a memory allocation of 4000 bytes.

"The *LinkROM* command links the file "ADE" to the allocated ROM number. The file name should be adjusted to match whatever file is to be loaded as a ROM image. (ADE is an assembler ROM which is very useful for decoding BBC machine code.)

"The command *MakeROM* loads the file into the appropriate location for use by the emulator. The last command calls and runs the *!65Host* application, with the loaded ROM acting as the active ROM.

"Lines 3, 4 and 5 can be duplicated for any number of ROM images provided that the ROM number is changed. Note that ROM numbers 9, 10 and 12 are used by *!65Host* for Utilities, ADFS and Basic. Use the command *ROMS when running the emulator to see which ROMs are loaded and available.

"Once loaded the old BBC B ROMs can be run and operated just as they were on the BBC B. I don't have a copy of the View ROM, but I do have copies of several others which all operate correctly under the emulator, including one I wrote myself many years ago.

"The original questioner to Mike Cook, Harry Smith from Cheadle, asked about saving the original ROM image to disk. This is not trivial and needs a BBC program to do the work. I have a number of utilities to do this

---

Aarón Larnder goes on to ask another question:

"I have two machines, an A5000 and an A3010 that I would like to connect using Econet. The A5000 already has an Econet upgrade fitted but the A3010 doesn't, and I know the standard upgrade can't be used with it, so is it possible to get an expansion card that provides Econet capability?"

Yes you can get a card to fit an Econet into an A3010, but it's not as simple as just connecting two computers together. You need a network server (another computer dedicated to just controlling the network). So you are always "throwing away" one computer, therefore there is not much point in networking just two computers (at least with Econet anyway). If this were a Mac the file sharing software would allow you to do this through your serial port but I know of nothing similar on an Acorn.

And one from me, has anyone written a software synthesiser for our machine? I'm not talking about something like the software synth from ESP's as that converts a MIDI stream into preset sounds. What I am after is software where you can design the sound making algorithm preferably using a granular synth technique, anyone know of one?

including a Basic program which is on the cover disc."

Jon Wright wants to know if he is trying to do something impossible:

"I recently came about the idea of turning my Risc PC into a 'DJ mixing station' that would allow me to do things like mix two songs from either CD drives, mp3 files or realtime input and have this all done from a suitable desktop front end. This is really software based excepting the realtime input which isn't possible with my setup at the moment.

"Now for the reason I am writing to you; I'd also like to have a piece of hardware so that I can do things like simulating the spin of a record, control the computer's volume using a pot and control mixing volume using a slider. At the moment I'm looking into how complex this would be. My knowledge of electronics is up to A-level standard although my father used to do a lot of this sort of thing, for example, controlling greenhouse conditions from a Spectrum using the Interface II. I am currently doing Computer Science/Business Studies at Brunel University although right now I am on work placement.

"I have a BBC User/Analogue port and MIDI port double width expansion card and an orange Unilab 'box' which I used to use for sampling sound into my A5000. Now comes the barrage of questions to which I hope you can shed some light upon:

"Will I be able to use this user port expansion card with the Risc PC barring the obvious size problem? For mixing purposes, I need to be able to have the volumes of the different sources at different volume levels, is this going to be possible? Ideally I would like to have some headphones plugged into the back of the Risc PC so that I can listen to a tune which isn't currently being played through the output. When I say output, I am expecting to invest in some sort of expansion card, perhaps the RiscBlaster by ACE or perhaps I can use the facilities of the Unilab box, I know sound can be played out of it (Armadeus used to do it) but this was in a single tasking mode and up to what quality I'm not sure. 44KHz is my minimum.

"Would I be able to build some sort of feedback 'turntable' that was controlled initially by the computer at a set speed according to the tune and the tune speed could then be altered by stopping the turntable or slowing it etc. On a related note, is it possible to hijack the digital sound signal out of the Risc PC and convert it into an SPDIF type format so that I could record digitally onto a MD or digital amp? I would be grateful if you could take some time to understand this, perhaps quite nutty idea, and let me know if it's a non-starter."

My initial impression is that while any one aspect of your project is perfectly possible I am not sure that you can do them all at once, certainly not as a desktop application. It would be a lot easier to do the mixing in hardware, see my hardware mixer article.

However onto your specific questions, the one about the deck simulator could be done, I would use a motor driving a mock turntable with belt coupling. On the turntable you need a shaft encoder or digital pot that gives you pulses as it turns, much like a mouse. Then set the motor going at some speed (use pulse width modulation) and measure the rate of returned pulses. Then any hand pressure speeding up or slowing down the mock turntable can be detected and fed back to the digital sampling rate.

I was in PC World the other day and I saw a device you might be interested in. It was a mock turntable and you put your mouse on the edge of it to control scratching. There was also PC software but that was the interesting bit. It's price was about £25 (although there was another on priced £35).

Next controlling the computer's volume using a pot is just a simple A/D converter, the one I did for the IIC bus would be best as there are four inputs to it and you can easily expand it in groups of four. The same goes for control mixing volume using a slider, however there you would have to take the number you got from the A/D and use it to mix the two signals in proportion. For example if you got the number 64 from the slider then the output would consist of sample A x 64/255 plus sample B x (255-64)/255.

Regarding the user port expansion card the electrical signals are just the same as the single width ones so if you can get it to fit it will work. As for the headphone plugged into the back of the Risc PC for listening to a tune which isn't currently being played through the output, again it's a simple matter as long as you can multitask fast enough, however such Hi-Fi demands for you own monitoring sounds a bit greedy to me.

With regards to hijacking the digital sound signal out of the Risc PC unfortunately you can't get at it in hardware, so you would have to divert it in software. However, as the software only works in bursts your hijacked data would need buffering with a hardware FIFO if you wanted to do it in real time. Also I don't think there is the processing power to convert it into a SPDIF format as there is no floating point hardware but you might be able to get away with it.

To conclude it sounds an interesting project but I am not at all convinced that it is cheaper than doing what you want to do conventionally. I also don't know if the interrupt system has the latency for what you require but I think you might just manage it. However you will definitely need to write it all in machine code. AU

Now Chris Woollard has also been bitten by the Millennium bug, and maybe has become infected, he writes:

"I am currently going through a stage of checking my equipment for the Year 2000. I realise that although pretty much all of the Acorn range is Y2K bombproof I have this strange feeling that the local power supply won't be. So my query is this is it possible to hook up a low voltage power supply of 12V and 5V straight through to the motherboard? And if so, what route should I be taking?

"I currently have plans to provide myself with a local supply of 24V from a wind turbine and battery system, and although I am quite able to step down the voltage to a comfortable 12V I would like to know what difficulties there might be (if any) to power the computer via a DC system, if there is no power on 01/01/00.

"Certainly it would be nigh on impossible to power a large monitor from the supply I have in mind even if I fitted an inverter between batteries and itself so I reckon I could get by with a low power LCD display for the time being."

I am sure that there is going to be no such problem in the Year 2000 a lot of the problem is just media hype written by technically ignorant journalists. It makes a sensational story, and then when nothing much happened they will all pat themselves on the back thinking they alerted people to the problem in time. Remember how all the world's communication satellites were supposed to be knocked out by the meteor storm last November?

However to answer your problem it is possible to run a computer off a DC supply all you have to do is to make a regulator. I did a project in April '87 which used a switch mode regulator, the text of which is on the Net at: http://math.mmu.ac.uk/Physics/Acorn/BB/BB87.html

I don't have any of the coils I used anymore but you could probably wind them yourself with the appropriate core. A switched mode system is most efficient but you could use a simple series regulator if you want. As to the display, in the December '87 *Micro User* article I showed how to drive a LCD display from the computer. Unfortunately this was a model B so the software would have to be re-written for the RISC computers. However I really don't think there will be a problem.

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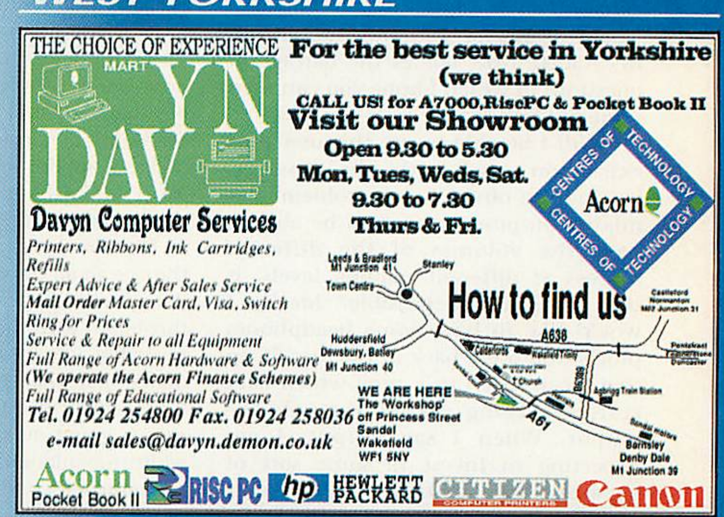
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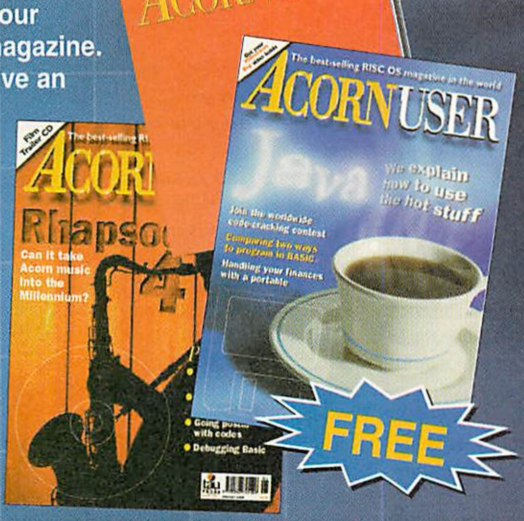
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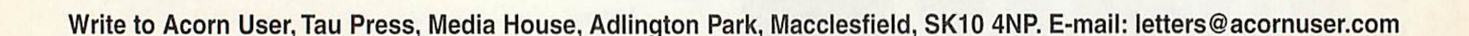
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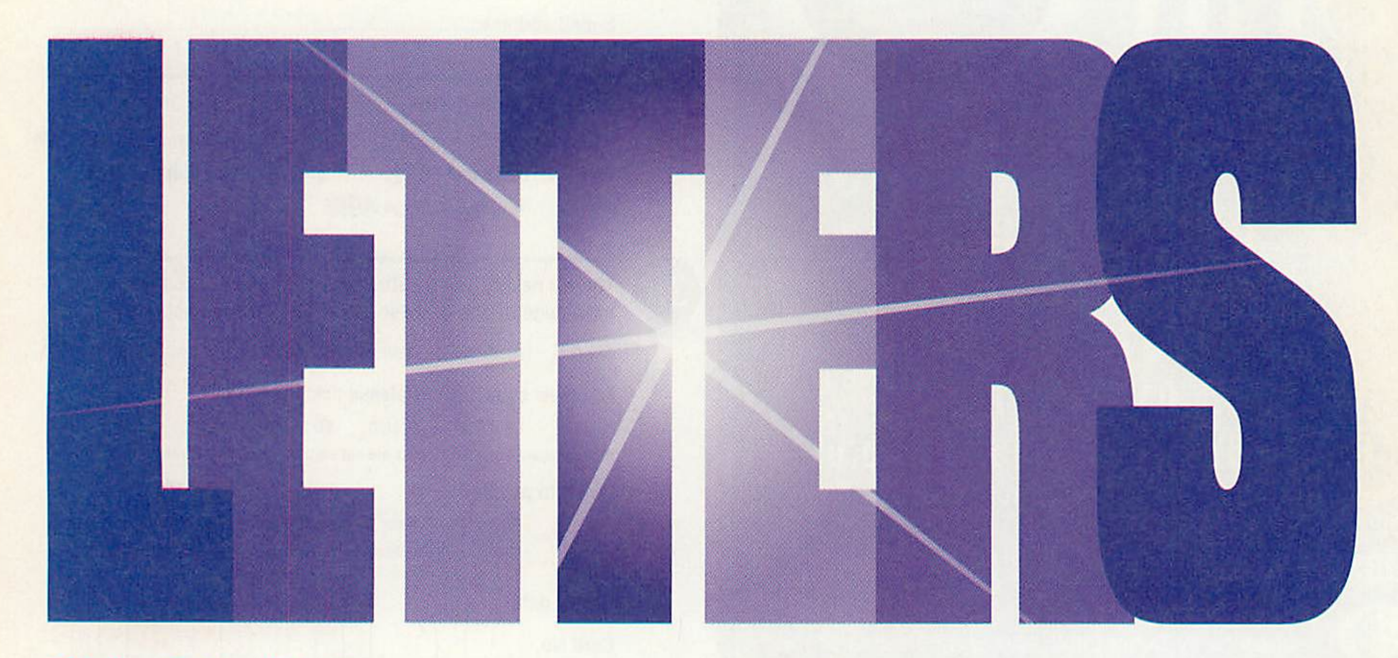
The Direct Debit Guarantee



- This Guarantee is offered by all Banks and Building Societies that take part in the Direct Debit Scheme.
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Write to Acorn User, Tau Press, Media House, Adlington Park, Macclesfield, SK10 4NP. E-mail: letters@acornuser.com





'Sibelius finished' Part I

I read with great interest the letter from Steve Reading (January issue) and have to say that my own experiences are not very different from those which your correspondent has described.

I retired from full time work some four years ago and, while never a full-time professional musician, I have for many years been a keen and very busy amateur musician. On retirement I purchased an Acorn computer simply because I wished to be able to make use of a good quality music writing program which I thought I could put to good use in my retirement. This has proved to be quite correct and I have enjoyed (and still enjoy) using *!Sibelius* and would recommend it to anyone.

During the middle of last year my wife and I decided that we could update our computer and decided to buy a Risc PC with StrongARM facility, a greatly increased memory, CD-ROM and a scanner and we actually acquired this package during the early part of september.

Imagine my reaction when I read that *!Sibelius* - despite all assurances to the contrary - decided that they were going to abandon and make their product available to the PC market. My own daughter - who had previously run Acorn machine - did suggest, when I bought the RPC, that maybe I was making a mistake and should have retained my old A3010 just to use for *!Sibelius* and that I should have purchased a PC (not Acorn) for all our other computer work, and I certainly now wish that I had listened to her.

I am greatly disappointed with Acorn - not with the performance of my Risc PC however, except of course that it will not run half the CDs which I have because the programs are not compatible, but simply

Ancestry news

Last year you gave a great lift and then a sudden let-down to all users of *Ancestry I*, the genealogical package, when you announced that a new form of the original *Ancestry I* was being written which would probably solve the many problens that the abysmal *Ancestry II* had created for all lovers of the original program.

The circumstances which brought about a halt to this new development were indeed tragic, but we hoped that someone would be able ro take up the almost completed task.

Since you reported that people to do this were being sort there has been a complete silence in your magazine about developments. I am sure that I am not the only one waiting with baited breath for a positive outcome. Please find out the latest position and put us out of our misery at the earliest opportunity.

Mr F T Haylett

Paul Vigay was kind enough to supply the necessary information...

"Ancestry+ will be sold by APDL who now have the rights. They forwarded the source to me so I have completed Graham's nearly finished Ancestry+ and it appears to be all working. I'm just waiting to hear from Dave Holden (APDL) about bug reports, as he said he has a list of things to forward on to me but I haven't received them yet. When I do I will fix them ASAP and then I presume he will release it.

Once a first release version is available and there hopefully aren't too many bugs to fix I will start working on Ancestry 3 which will be a complete re-write - which I was going to work on with Graham anyway, before his sad death. Ancestry+ should be available pretty much as soon as Dave Holden has forwarded me the bug reports from beta testers, and unless something major is discovered (which it shouldn't be because I've tested it quite a lot) it should be released soon after. Ancestry3 probably won't appear before the summer though, or probably in time for this years Acorn World show (if there is one!!!).

I have a web page at http://www.matrix.clara.net/Acorn/tp/ancestry.html giving more details. This will soon be updated with screen shots, and other useful information."

because I think I was 'taken for a ride' by those to whom I explained my idea for updating my existing computer. They did nothing whatever to advise me - from their professional standpoint - that perhaps what I was proposing to do was not in my best interests.

I wonder how many more of your readers feel similarly 'let down' by both Acorn and in my particular case by Sibelius - the one reason why I purchased Acorn originally?

Alan Sardeson

'Sibelius finished' Part II

In reply to Steve Reading's letter (January issue), I would like to explain a few points about the new *!Sibelius* program.

The new program is not a version of *!Sibelius* 7 for the PC - it's a completely new piece of software. It was written from scratch in C++, and internally has nothing in common with *!Sibelius* 7 (which was written in machine code and could never be converted to Windows).

We decided to write the new *!Sibelius* program in C++ so that we could provide many useful features which *!Sibelius* 7 users have been crying out for for years, and which were too hard to program in machine code. Because C++ is platform-independent, this also meant we could release the new program on PC and Mac in addition to Acorn.

Right up to the day Acorn announced its closure of the workstation division we were planning to release the new program for RISC OS as soon as possible, though we had been waiting for some time for a new version of the Acorn C++ compiler.

With the closure of the workstation division Acorn also shelved the new compiler, which is why there is now unfortunately no prospect of an Acorn version of the new *!Sibelius* program.

We are as sorry about this as anyone - we devoted a lot of programming time and expense on the new Acorn version, and our customers have quite rightly been expecting, as we had, that an Acorn version would be released alongside versions for the PC and Mac.

Though it is theoretically possible that someone might develop a suitable compiler in the next few months, it would still take a further six months or so for us to complete the Acorn version. By that time - probably the year 2000 - it is not clear that there would be enough people still wanting to run the new program on Acorns. A large proportion of our users have already bought the new program for the PC, and I doubt many users (most of whom are professional who need *!Sibelius* every day) would be prepared to wait another year for an Acorn version to appear.

However, there is no reason why anyone who is happy with running *!Sibelius* 7 on their Acorn computer should need to consider moving to a PC or Mac, and we are continuing to provide support on Acorn Software and hardware entirely as normal.

Finally, I'm not quite sure why Steve's letter was headed 'Sibelius finished' - nothing could be further from the truth! We are expanding faster than ever, with offices worldwide, including San Fransisco, Los Angeles and Dallas. The release of the new *!Sibelius* program has brought the benefits of our software to many thousands of musicians worldwide. I'd have thought 'Sibelius goes from strength to strength' would have been more appropriate!

Ben Finn
MD Sibelius Software Ltd

!WBModules nightmare

On friday last week I was in WH Smith's in Warrington and I bought a copy of the March Acorn User. I do not buy this magazine regularly but occasionally depending upon what is on the disc. Looking at the cover disc page I decided to buy it as I was interested in the *!CassInlay* programme by Paul F Johnson.

My interest is due to the fact that I have used a simple programme *!InlayPrint* for many years to produce the inlay card for church tapes which I record and copy for those who are unable to get to church. When I loaded the program I got a message "Please locate *!WBModules* and try again. A copy can be found in the demos section at http://stcoll.ac.uk.clares". Sadly I am one of the many who own an Acorn computer but do not have access to the Internet.

I have searched through the magazine and nowhere can I find any warning that I would not be able to run this programme without these modules. It is very unfair and bad business practice not to put such information on the cover disc page. At one time we were also told whether a programme could run on the old Acorn models. I own an A5000 and an A3010 and I am sure that there are many thousands of Acorn owners who also do not own a Risc PC machine. I notice the *Info page has no such advice. Please be aware that there will be many like me who have bought this month's magazine in good faith and been disappointed. It will also be sad for Paul F Johnson as only a chosen few will benefit from what he has produced.

It is very sad that there is only one publication supporting the Acorn platform. I enjoyed *Archimedes World* and thought they produced some excellent discs over the years. Oh for the days when there were three magazines, when you were Editor of *Acorn Computing*, when we had even better discs!

Elvin Rose (feeling shortchanged)

The watergate scandal, Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky, that Arsenal goal against Sheffield Wednesday in the Cup, surely none of these have caused the same uproar and public outcry as the missing !WBModules did in mid-February.

Let me explain what happened, then hopefully you'll all put down those keyboards you're holding so menacingly and begin to forgive me.

It was a very simply mistake, the author (Paul F Johnson) sent us his program, !CassInlay, to be included on the cover disc. I popped it into my machine, dropped it onto my harddrive and ran it - everything worked fine. What I didn't realise was that this program required !WBModules to run, something I already have in my !Boot Tasks file which I'm sure the fairies must have placed there because I've never seen it before in my life.

I then unwittingly placed !CassInlay on the cover disc without it's companion !WBModules resulting in much cursing of Tau Press up and down the land.

All I can say is I didn't know, no-one in the office knew and I hope I've partly made up for it by placing it on this month's cover disc instead.

Am I forgiven? Dunstan Orchard (Assistant Editor)

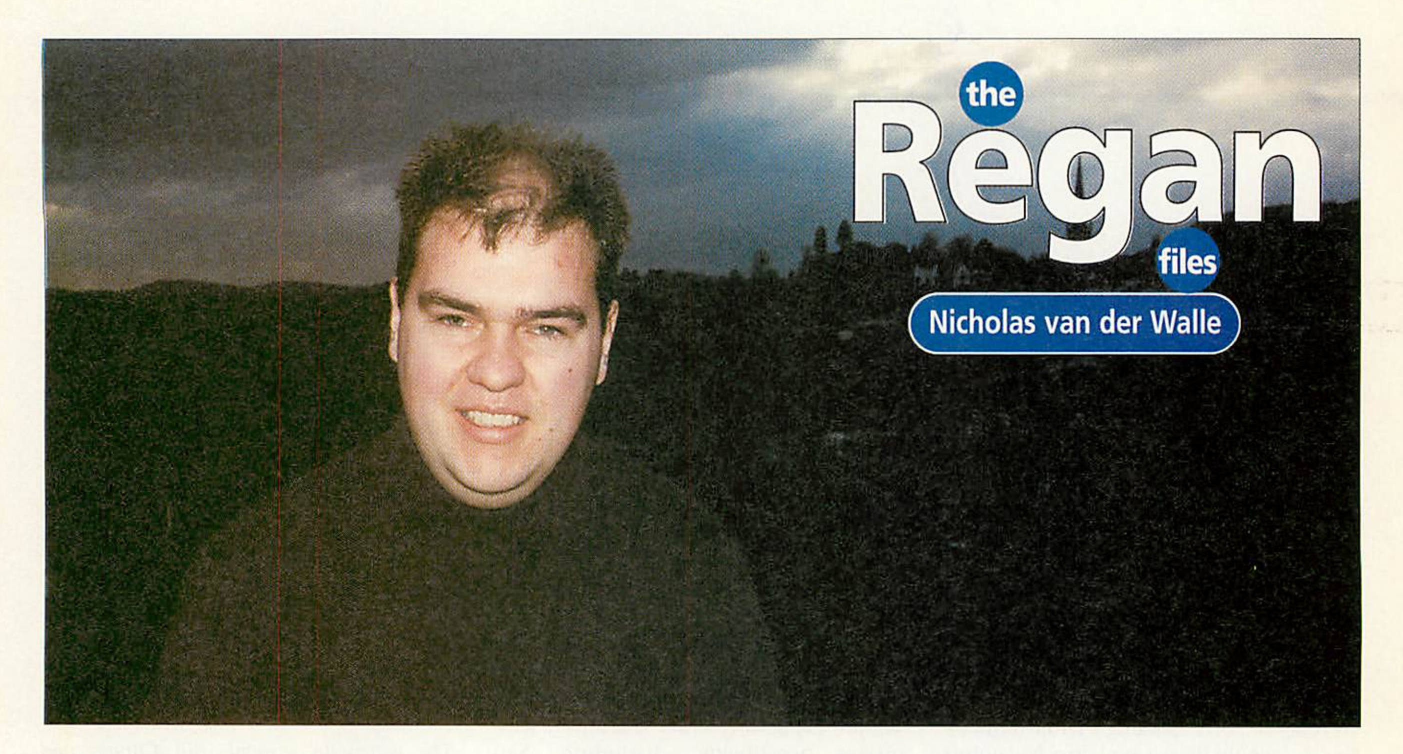
Air your views

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I'm in Ross-on-Wye looking for bookshops, but I've got my towns muddled and all the bookshops are actually along the Wye in Hay. What Ross-on-Wye *does* have is the great white hope for vector graphics on the Acorn platform himself: Nicholas van der Walle.

Nicholas was the voice behind Astute Graphics and now fronts Cerilica which will shortly be releasing *!Vantage* onto the Acorn graphics community. His official title is marketing director, a job that suits his bullish personality extremely well.

"I find in the Acorn market, both the typical user and business person are much more withdrawn than in a larger commercial environment. I am from an engineering background and I have seen how they operate there. Publicity firms are loud-mouthed and all that. I thought, 'Well, blow it.' I have spent the last year just talking on the phone, making contacts and that's how you get the impression we have been around longer.

"I have quite a few people visit here thinking that we are a big company with a warehouse. All you have to do is keep on chatting. Other people in the market seem to enjoy their work but not the PR, but then again I don't have any other talent except for talking, that's what it comes down to. I don't understand why more people don't do it, be more go-getting."

Nicholas did a sandwich degree in car design at university – in his very first job they got rid of half the company after six months. Nicholas quickly realised that in this environment you are on your own, and have to make your own luck.

After university Nicholas got a job designing JCB's – just the cabs to start with, then the whole thing. During this time he used his Acorn all the time and completely annoyed the design manager who wanted Nicholas to use pen and paper. Fortunately, the managing director was on Nicholas's side.

Nicholas then started Astute Graphics, named after a remote-controlled car. Unfortunately, the demand for graphic artists in the Acorn market was and is low, because people can do it themselves. Quite often they *shouldn't* (and it shows), but they can and do. So he decided to branch out into software, and set to work on a replacement for *!ArtWorks*, something he and much of the Acorn community had been clamouring for for years.

He tested out the market with a little package called *!Phantasm*, which was a sort of post-processor for the colours in ArtWorks files. As he can't program – "not even *Hello World!*" – Nicholas got someone else to write it. *!Phantasm* went very well, making a little money but more importantly showing that there really was a market there to make money from.

> **We are here to make money and we have to do it properly**

By luck (but probably self-made luck) Nicholas met the right people to get Cerilica going. In Cerilica, Simon Birtwistle does all the programming, while Nicholas keeps the customers happy and is the general dogsbody.

"We are here to make money and we have to do it properly," proclaims Nicholas. "That is what a market is. We are not here for a laugh, we are doing it because we want to make a living. If I had left high school at 16 and gone and been a welder I would have probably earned £50,000 more than I have done; I calculated that the other day and it was quite frightening. At some point I want that money back."

Nicholas was brought up literally a stone's throw away from the current Tau Press offices. He remembers playing in the fields before they built the 'horrible' building. His father worked at Manchester University and would bring home BBC Bs on which Nicholas would play *Élite*.

"The first time I touched an Archimedes was in the library at high school", continues Nicholas. "It was a brand new computer, a lovely shiny thing, and I thought I would see if there was a game on it. I found this thing called *!HForm* and, not knowing what it was, thought it might be some sort of game. It asked me if I wanted to re-format the hard disc. I thought 'Yes'....then I thought 'No!' but it was too late. They had just spent a whole week putting every single book into the Archimedes.'

Nicholas is not an Acorn fanatic as such – to him it's just another tool like a Black & Decker drill. But he's aware that others, many of them potential customers, see it very differently.

"People ask whether I would leave the market. I will be loyal to the market; if we sell enough to make money to do the next version we will give you the next version. We already have enough money in deposits to cover what we have done. So long as enough people buy the program we will continue to develop it."

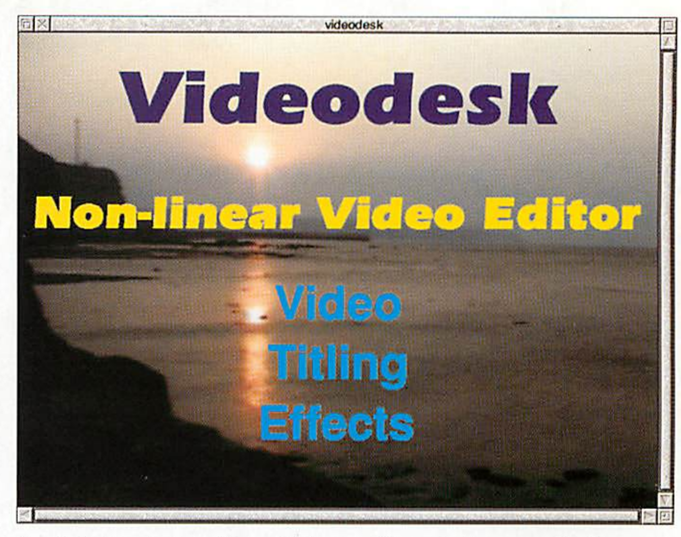
Jill Regan AU

Videodesk

Videodesk is a powerful non-linear video editing system. It allows full-size, full-colour and full-motion video to be edited to frame accuracy, and effects and titles added. The finished material can then be output back to video for recording or display.

Key Features:

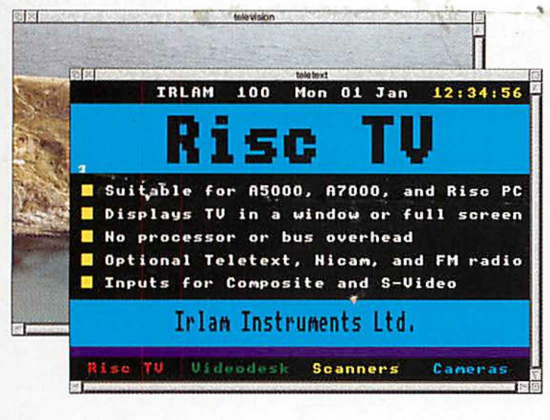
- Composite and S-Video inputs and outputs.
- 50 fields per second capture and playback.
- 24 bit colour range.
- Resolution of up to 768 pixels x 576 lines.
- High-quality uncompressed still grabs.
- VITC Timecode input and output.
- 16 bit stereo audio inputs and outputs.
- Audio sampling at up to CD and DAT rates.
- Multiple audio tracks (polyphonic).
- Instant playback of edits.
- High performance Replay movie capture.
- Multi-level undo and redo.
- Edit Decision List (EDL) generation.



Sophisticated video editing software is supplied as standard, which is flexible and simple-to-use. Editing is performed on a multi-track time-line with separate audio and video tracks.

Video effects are generated digitally and include over 100 dissolves, wipes, fades and slides. Comprehensive titling software uses the RISC OS outline font system, and titles can be made to scroll, flash, fade and be overlayed onto the video.

Risc TV



Risc TV is a unique multimedia digitiser complete with built-in television tuner and audio processor, which allows you to watch television on the desktop and digitise high quality still images from the tuner or an external video source.

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